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# LINE OF FIRE





# 4

**ALL-ACTION ISSUES EVERY MONTH**

★ No. 41 **THE DEVIL TO PAY**

*They were renegades—roaming the hills of Italy like a pack of hungry wolves*

★ No. 42 **LUST FOR POWER**

*When treachery commands a high enough price, no man is safe from betrayal*

★ No. 43 **ALL OR NOTHING**

*They hid their fears beneath the snarl of battle*

★ No. 44 **JUNGLE GREEN**

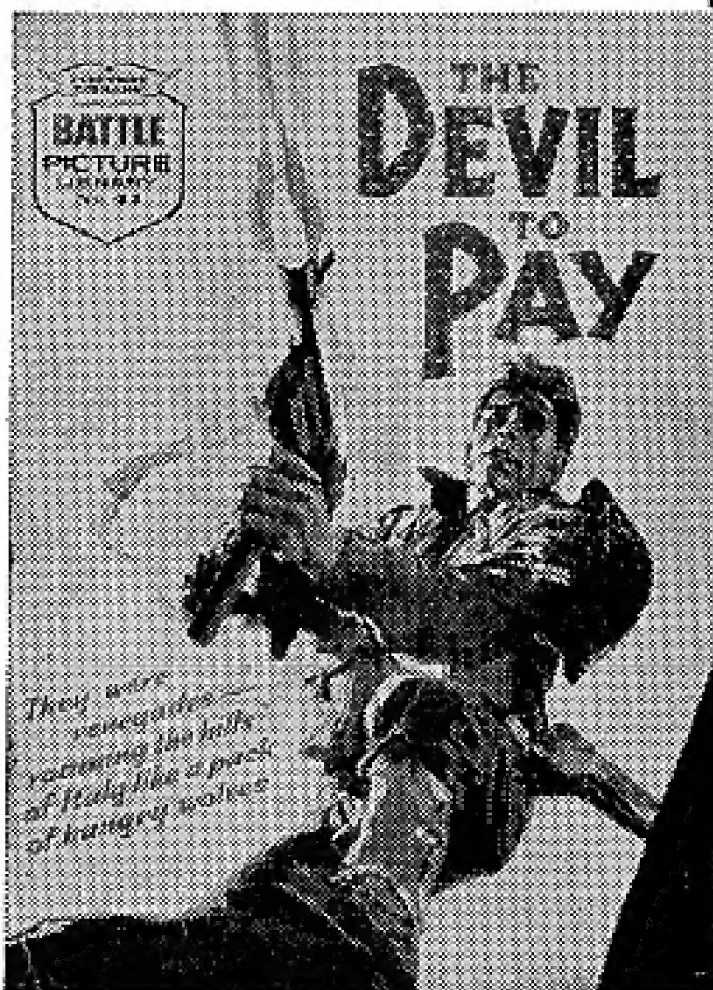
*There is a time to run—and a time to fight*

# BATTLE PICTURE LIBRARY

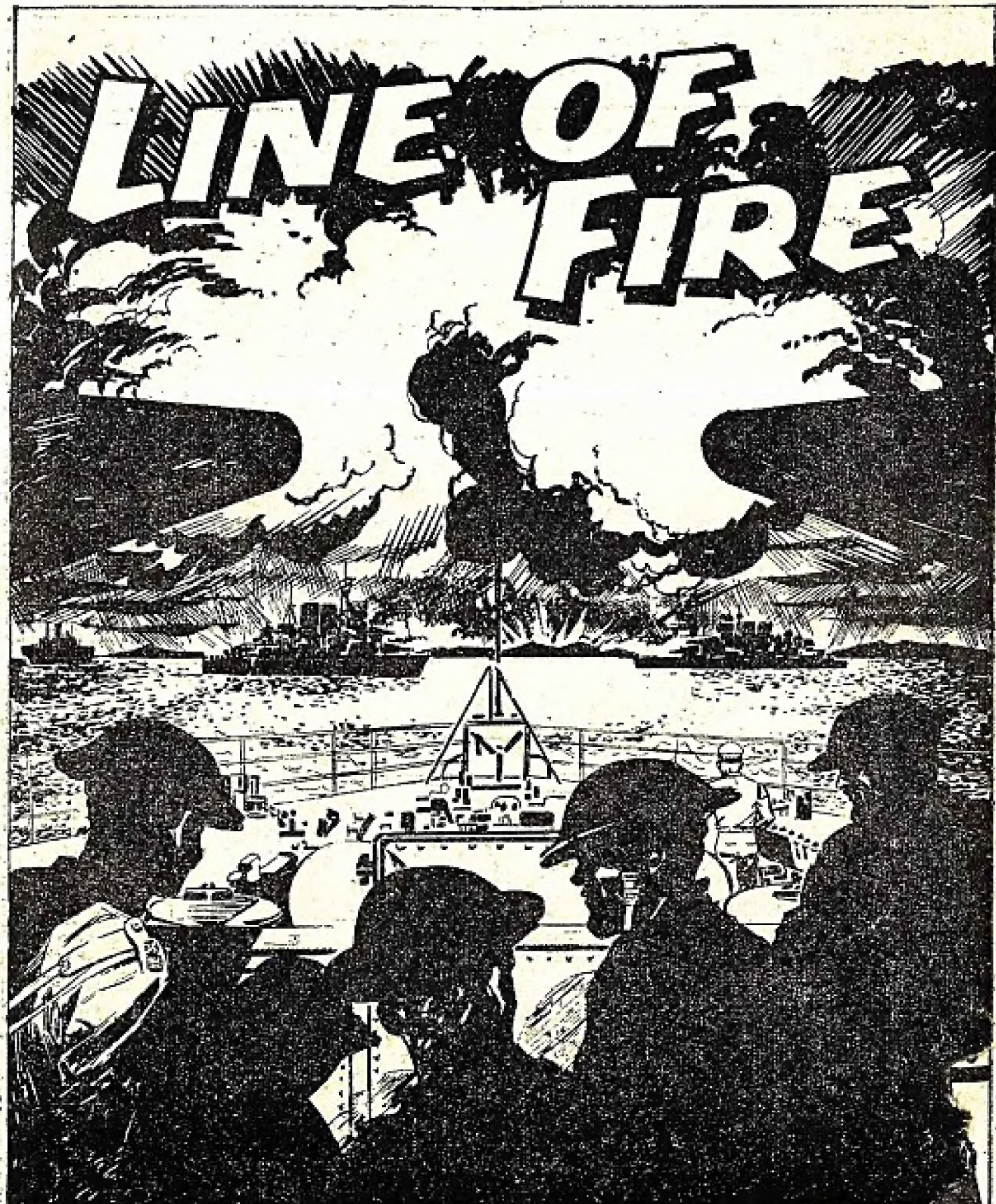
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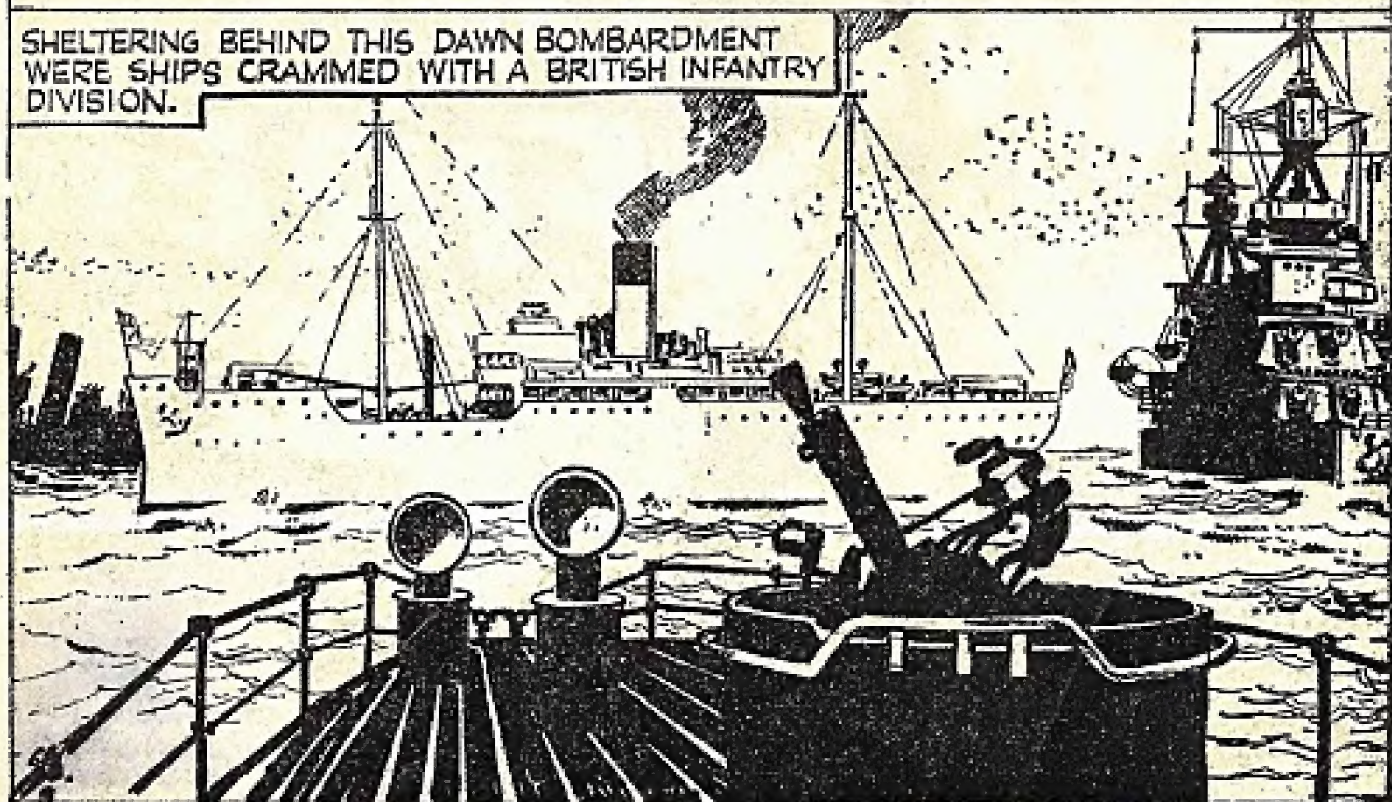


DAWN, SEPTEMBER 3RD, 1943. THE SUDDEN THUNDERCLAP OF BRITISH NAVAL GUNS SHATTERED THE CALM OF THE MESSINA STRAITS. THE VIOLENT PRELUDE TO THE COMBINED ALLIED ASSAULT ON THE TOE OF SOUTHERN ITALY HAD BEGUN.



## Chapter 1. OPERATION 'TOE'

SHELTERING BEHIND THIS DAWN BOMBARDMENT WERE SHIPS CRAMMED WITH A BRITISH INFANTRY DIVISION.



ABOARD ONE OF THE TROOPSHIPS, A COMPANY WAS BEING ADDRESSED BY ITS COMMANDER. THE MEN LISTENED ATTENTIVELY, NERVOUSLY. NOT SO SERGEANT WILLIAM CRAGG, A PLATOON LEADER OF RARE COURAGE AND A HARD-BOILED VETERAN...





CRAGG'S MIND WAS NOT ON CAPTAIN BOYD'S WORDS. HE WAS WONDERING HOW HIS COMPANY COMMANDER WOULD REACT TO THEIR FIRST TASTE OF FIRE...



WE SHALL GO IN ON A TWO BRIGADE FRONT— SECURE A BEACHHEAD AND THEN STRIKE NORTH UP THE COAST TO SALERNO.

HAVING ANNOUNCED THE BATTLE ORDER, CAPTAIN BOYD DISMISSED THE MEN AND THEN BECKONED TO CRAGG AND LIEUTENANT ALLISON, HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND.

ALLISON, YOU WILL TAKE SERGEANT CRAGG AND TEN MEN. YOUR JOB IS TO DESTROY THE MACHINE-GUN POST ON JETTY 'C'. I LEAVE IT TO YOUR INITIATIVE HOW YOU DO IT.

VERY GOOD, SIR!



ALLISON'S REPLY WAS SHARP WITH ANNOYANCE, AND CRAGG GUESSED WHY.



## Line Of Fire

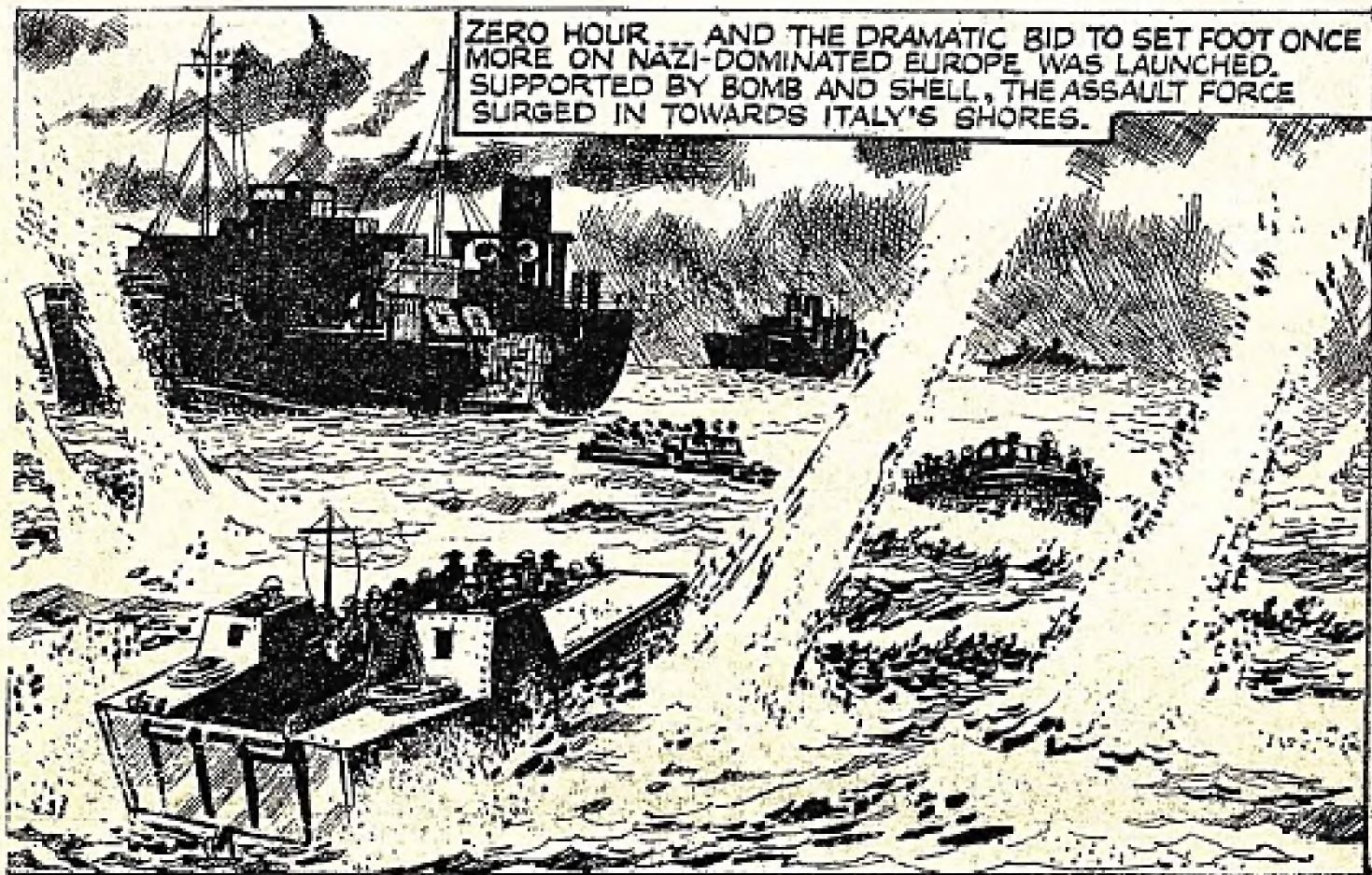
AS CAPTAIN BOYD STRODE AWAY, ALLISON TURNED TO CRAGG.

THE O.C. TALKS ABOUT MY INITIATIVE, BUT I'VE A SHREWD IDEA HE DOESN'T REALLY TRUST ME, SERGEANT.

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT, SIR, BUT HE'S CERTAINLY CHANGED SINCE THE OLD DAYS IN THE DESERT.

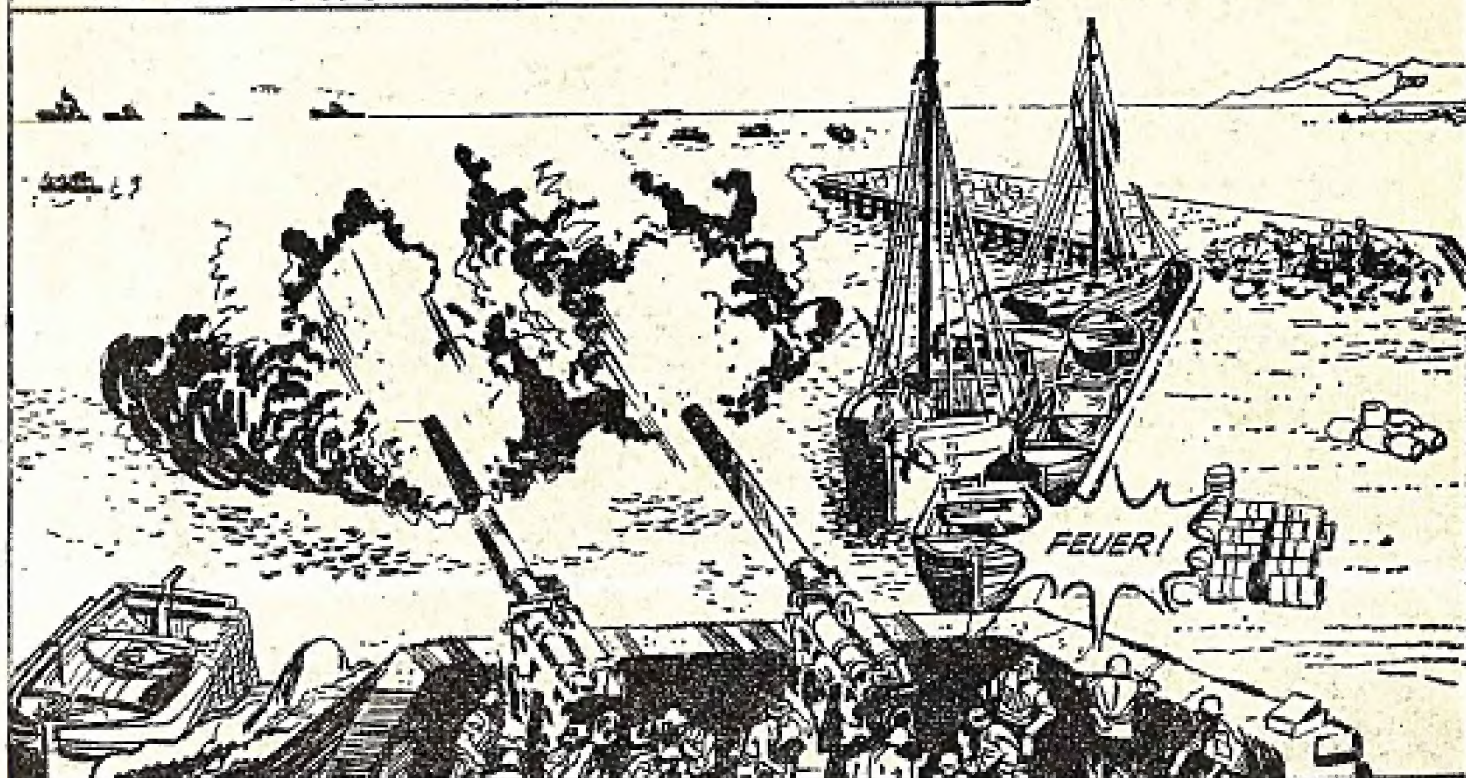


ZERO HOUR... AND THE DRAMATIC BID TO SET FOOT ONCE MORE ON NAZI-DOMINATED EUROPE WAS LAUNCHED. SUPPORTED BY BOMB AND SHELL, THE ASSAULT FORCE SURGED IN TOWARDS ITALY'S SHORES.





THE INVASION FLEET HAD BEEN KEENLY OBSERVED BY GERMAN GUN BATTERIES AND THEIR SALVOS BEGAN TO REACH OUT THREATENINGLY...



JOINING IN THIS DEFENSIVE FIRE WAS THE GUN BATTERY AT THE BASE OF JETTY 'C' AND THE MACHINE-GUN POST MIDWAY UP ITS LENGTH.

WITH HIS GAZE FIXED ON THIS SAME MACHINE-GUN POST, LIEUTENANT ALLISON DIRECTED HIS AMPHIBIOUS D.U.K.W. TOWARDS HIS OBJECTIVE.





## Line Of Fire

THROUGH A HAIL OF LASHING BULLETS, THE AMPHIBIAN WAS BROUGHT SMARTLY UNDER THE JETTY'S HEAD AND ALLISON LED THE ASSAULT.

UP ON THE JETTY,  
LADS, AND FIND  
WHAT COVER YOU  
CAN!



ALLISONS PARTY SWARMED UP ON TO THE JETTY AND TOOK COVER BEHIND SOME OLD BARRELS, WHICH GAVE THEM TEMPORARY SHELTER FROM THE MACHINE-GUNS, THIRTY YARDS AWAY.

KEEP YOUR  
HEADS DOWN!  
WE'VE GOT TO  
CLOBBER THOSE  
SPANDAUS BEFORE  
WE CAN MOVE FROM  
HERE!





WITH TRIGGER FINGERS NERVOUSLY CROOKED, THE GERMAN MACHINE-GUNNERS KEPT THE INVADERS PINNED DOWN.

KEEP ALERT—  
THE ENGLANDERS  
WILL TRY TO  
RUSH US!

IT WAS OBVIOUS TO THE LANDING-PARTY THAT THEY COULD NOT STAY WHERE THEY WERE INDEFINITELY. SERGEANT CRAGG TURNED TO HIS OFFICER...

MAYBE I COULD WORK ALONG  
UNDER THE JETTY AND TAKE  
JERRY IN THE REAR, SIR.

GOOD IDEA,  
SERGEANT—BUT  
I'M THE ONE WHO  
OUGHT TO GO. THIS  
IS WHAT WE'LL DO...

A MINUTE LATER, CRAGG WAS HELPING  
LIEUTENANT ALLISON OVER THE JETTY'S  
SIDE...

MIND  
HOW YOU GO,  
SIR!

DON'T WORRY  
ABOUT ME, SERGEANT.  
LOOK OUT FOR MY  
SIGNAL.



## Line Of Fire

SLOWLY, THE LIEUTENANT WORKED HIS WAY ALONG THE SLIPPERY TIMBERS...



CONFIDENT OF THEIR INVULNERABLE POSITION, THE GERMANS GAVE NO THOUGHT TO THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ATTACK FROM ANYWHERE BUT THEIR IMMEDIATE FRONT - UNTIL A WARNING CRY SPUN THEM ROUND...



IT WAS CAPTAIN BOYD'S PARTY...





CLAMBERING THE LAST YARD, LIEUTENANT ALLISON CAUTIOUSLY PEERED OVER THE TOP OF THE JETTY ONLY TO SEE HE HAD BEEN FORESTALLED.

COME ON,  
HANDS UP!

BOYD!  
THE ROTTEN  
POACHER'S BEATEN  
ME TO IT!



CRAGG RAN FORWARD IN TIME TO HEAR THE FURIOUS LIEUTENANT SPEAK HIS MIND...

CONFOUND IT!  
THIS TARGET WAS  
MY PIGEON!

WELL, YOU WERE  
TAKING YOUR TIME  
ABOUT IT, ALLISON.





STILL SMARTING WITH HURT PRIDE, ALLISON GLARED AFTER BOYD AS HE ESCORTED THE PRISONERS AWAY.

HE'S DONE THAT BEFORE—  
TELLING ME TO USE MY  
INITIATIVE AND THEN  
STICKING HIS NOSE IN!

I KNOW HOW  
YOU FEEL, SIR...  
AND I THINK I KNOW  
WHY THE CAPTAIN  
ACTS THAT WAY...



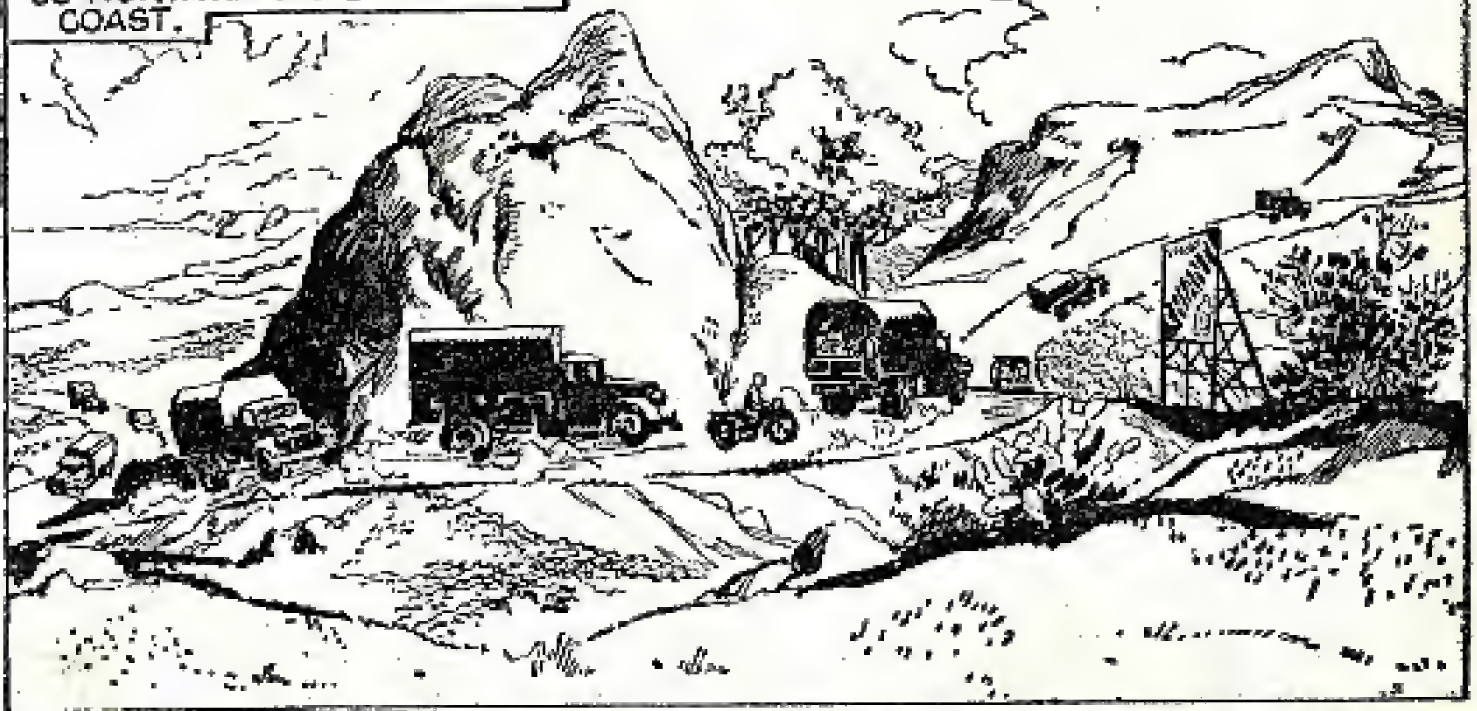
BUT FURTHER TALK WAS CUT SHORT. THE MAIN WAVE WAS POUNDING THROUGH THE SURF AND EVERY OUNCE OF COVERING FIRE WAS VITALLY NEEDED.

GOOD LADS!  
SPREAD OUT  
AND GET OFF THE  
BEACH!





GERMAN OPPOSITION TO THE ALLIED LANDINGS WAS QUICKLY OVERCOME. AFTER THE BRIDGE-HEAD HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED, THE BRITISH DIVISION SWEEPED THROUGH SAN GIOVANNI AND SO NORTHWARDS UP THE COAST.



IN ONE OF THE TRUCKS...

I THINK YOU KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT CAPTAIN BOYD THAT I DON'T, CRAGG. CARE TO TELL ME ABOUT IT?

IT WAS BACK IN THE DESERT, SIR, THE CAPTAIN VOLUNTEERED TO JOIN THE CHINDITS IN BURMA...



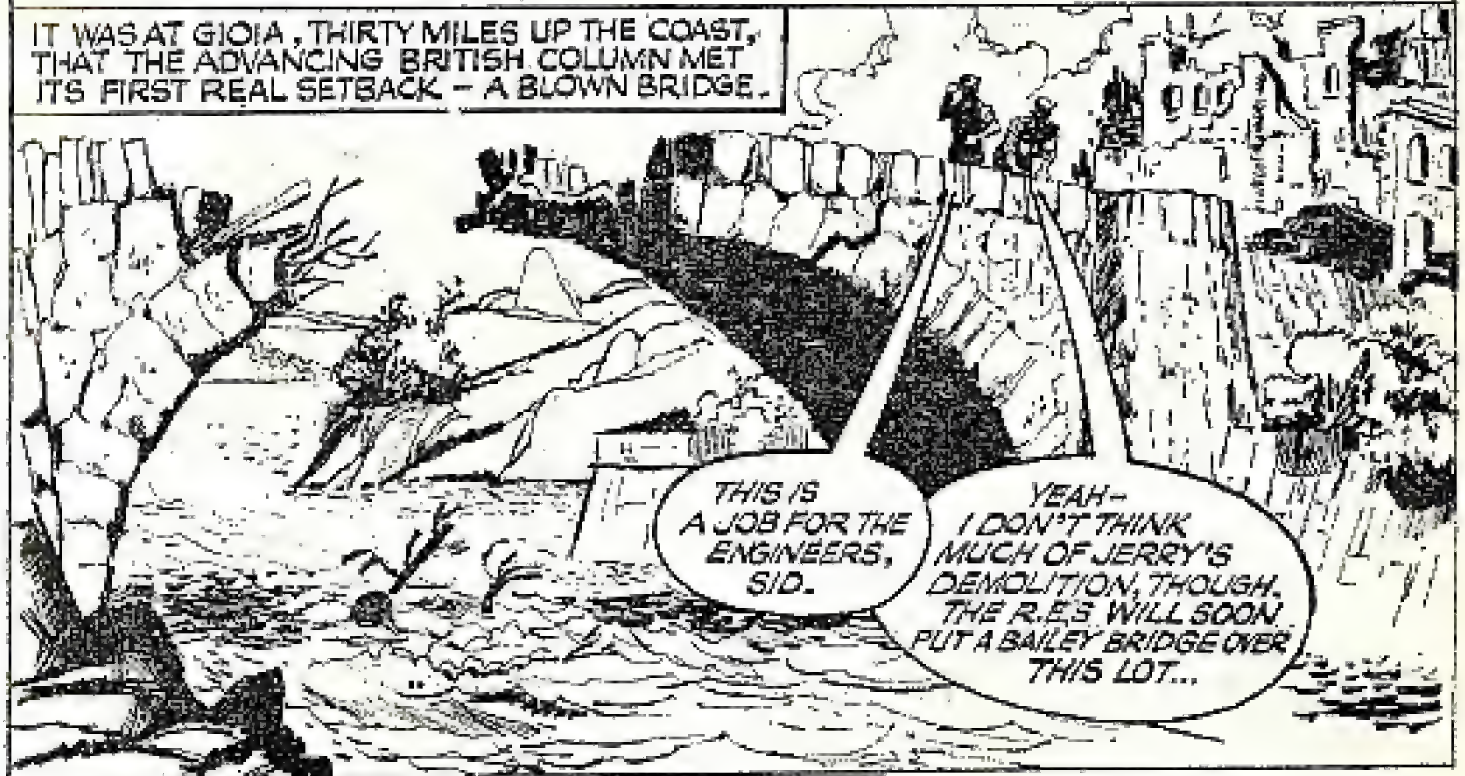




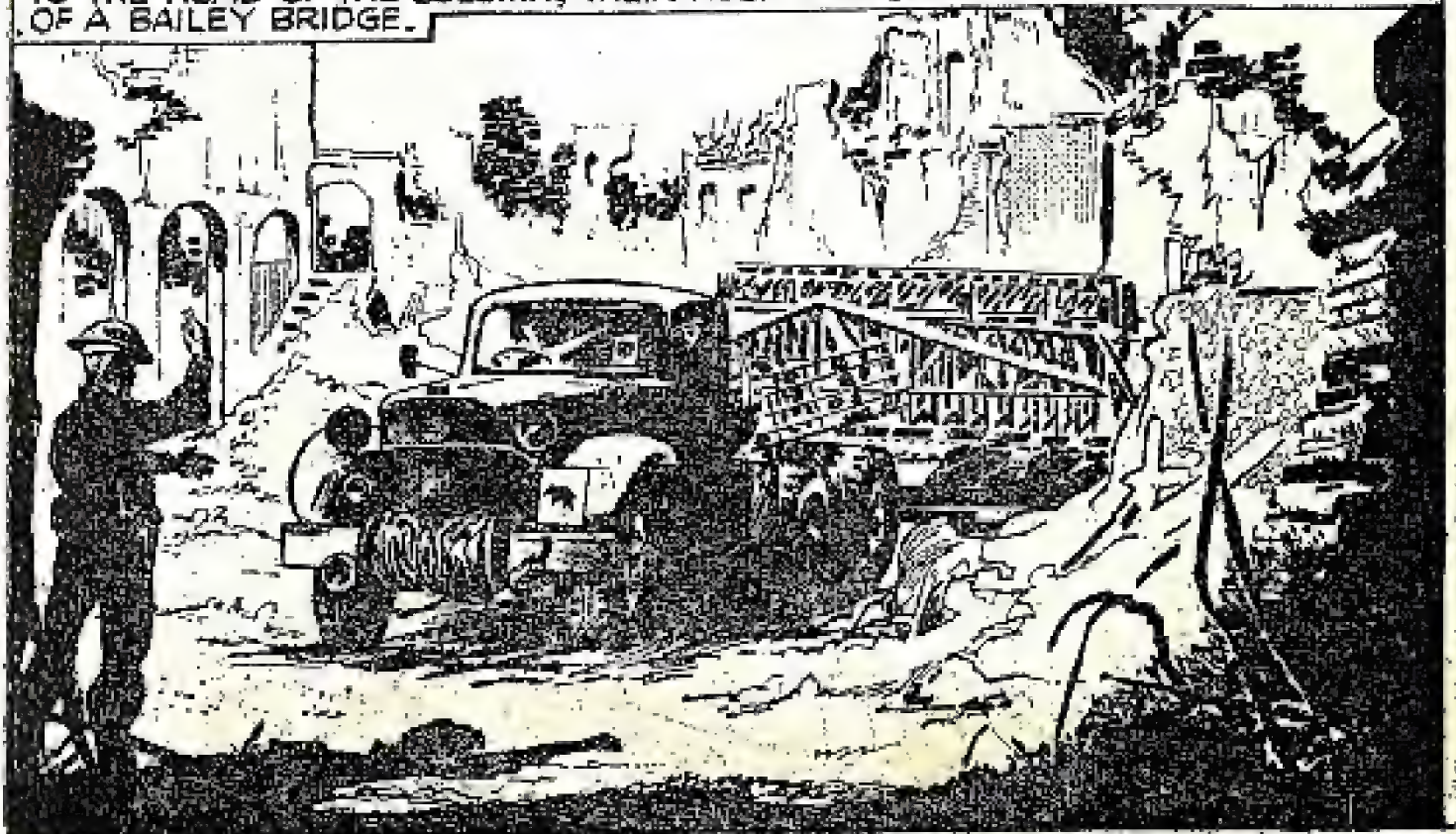


## Chapter 2. *The UNTIMELY SHOT*

IT WAS AT GIOIA, THIRTY MILES UP THE COAST, THAT THE ADVANCING BRITISH COLUMN MET ITS FIRST REAL SETBACK - A BLOWN BRIDGE.



ANSWERING THE URGENT SIGNAL, A DETACHMENT OF ROYAL ENGINEERS MOVED UP TO THE HEAD OF THE COLUMN, THEIR HUGE TRANSPORTERS CARRYING SECTIONS OF A BAILEY BRIDGE.





EVERYTHING WAS SET FOR THE ADVANCE TO CONTINUE — UNTIL FATE STRUCK IN THE SHAPE OF AN 88MM SHELL — ON THE BRIDGE TRANSPORTER.



ONE HIGH EXPLOSIVE SHELL HAD WRECKED ALL PLANS FOR AN IMMEDIATE ADVANCE. A WORRIED BRIGADE COMMANDER CALLED AN IMPROMPTU CONFERENCE...

THAT WAS AN EIGHTY-EIGHT, GENTLEMEN — PROBABLY FROM A TIGER TANK. WHAT'S MORE, THEY'VE GOT OUR RANGE. THOSE TANKS HAVE GOT TO BE KNOCKED OUT — QUICKLY!



I'LL TAKE A PLATOON, SIR...

BUT CAPTAIN BOYD STEPPED FORWARD QUICKLY AN EXPRESSION OF FIERCE EARNESTNESS ON HIS FACE.

COULD I BE GIVEN THE JOB, SIR? I'D LIKE THE CHANCE.

WELL... ALL RIGHT, CAPTAIN BOYD. BUT YOUNG CARTRIGHT HERE...





THE BRIGADIER HAD BEEN PREPARED TO DETAIL LIEUTENANT CARTRIGHT, A KEEN YOUNG INFANTRYMAN, TO KNOCK OUT THE TANKS. HE HAD NOT EVEN CONSIDERED THE OLDER, SENIOR MAN.

MY COMPANY CAN HANDLE IT, SIR - WE'VE GOT THE NEW P.I.A.T ...

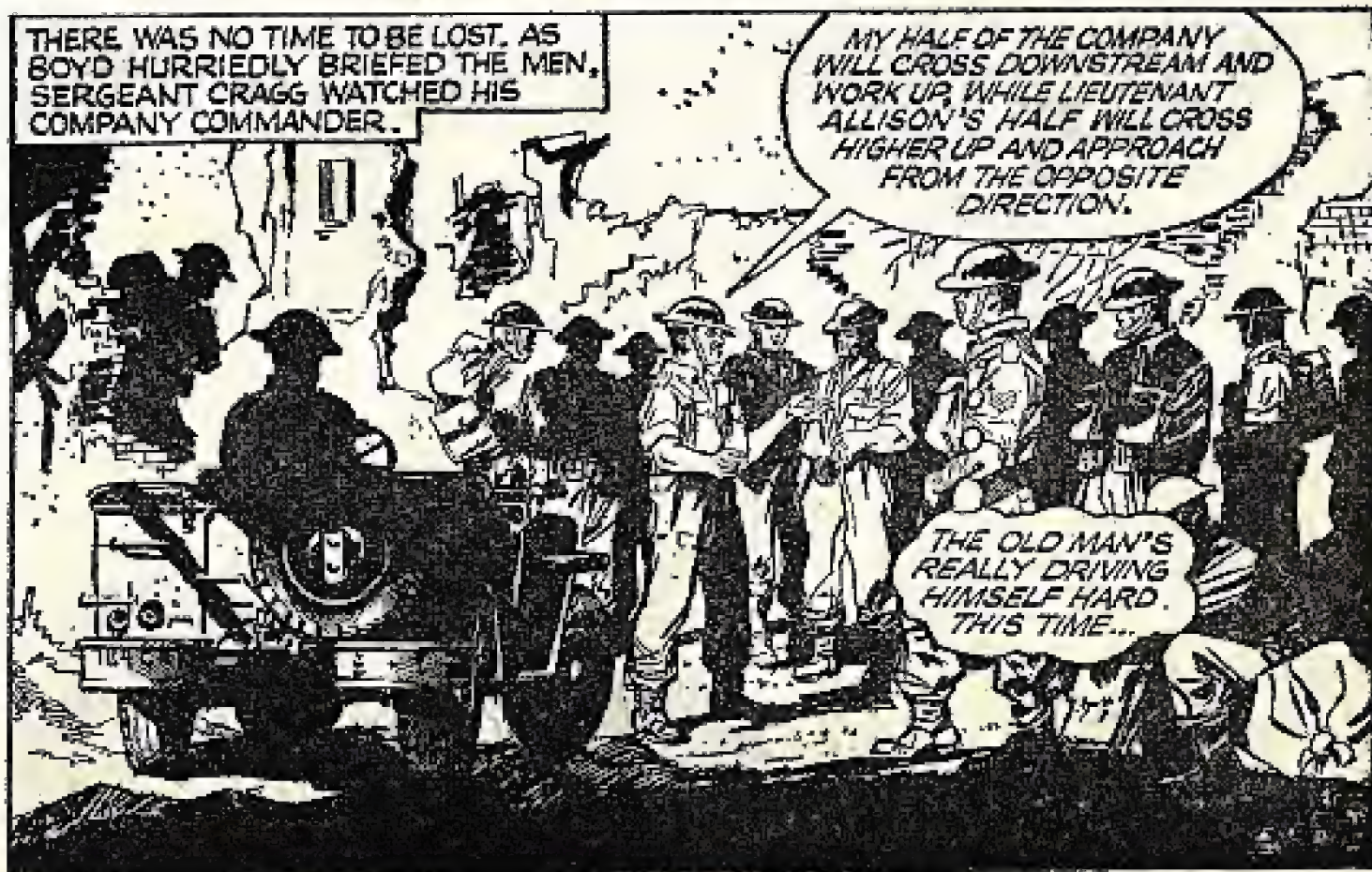
VERY WELL, BOYD... IF YOU'RE SO KEEN... BUT IT MUST BE QUICK!

THE CAPTAIN'S CERTAINLY A GLUTTON FOR THE TOUGH JOBS!

THERE WAS NO TIME TO BE LOST. AS BOYD HURRIEDLY BRIEFED THE MEN, SERGEANT CRAGG WATCHED HIS COMPANY COMMANDER.

MY HALF OF THE COMPANY WILL CROSS DOWNSTREAM AND WORK UP, WHILE LIEUTENANT ALLISON'S HALF WILL CROSS HIGHER UP AND APPROACH FROM THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

THE OLD MAN'S REALLY DRIVING HIMSELF HARD THIS TIME...





BOYD TURNED TO LIEUTENANT ALLISON...

YOU TAKE SERGEANT CRAGG...  
WORK OUT YOUR  
OWN PLAN. USE  
YOUR...

INITIATIVE?  
VERY GOOD  
SIR...



THE COMPANY SPLIT INTO TWO GROUPS. WORKING UP-RIVER, ALLISON'S PARTY BEGAN THE CROSSING... THEIR NERVES TENSE, FOR THEY EXPECTED AT ANY MOMENT THE LASH OF ENEMY BULLETS.

NO ONE'S  
SPOTTED US,  
SO FAR.





CAUTIOUSLY, THEY WADED ASHORE ON THE FAR BANK.



THEY FOUND THE LITTLE TOWN DESERTED. WARILY, THEY WORKED FORWARD THROUGH THE RUBBLE-STREWN STREETS.



NO SOUND CAME TO MARK THE ENEMY'S POSITION AND ALLISON DETAILED A SCOUTING PARTY.





SERGEANT CRAGG AND HIS DETACHMENT CIRCLED AWAY, THROUGH THE RUINED HOUSES OF THE LITTLE TOWN. SUDDENLY, HE HELD UP A WARNING HAND...



CRAGG SENT A MAN BACK TO FETCH LIEUTENANT ALLISON AND THE MAIN PARTY. THEN THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS MADE THE SERGEANT SPIN ROUND...



CRAGG'S SURPRISE WAS COMPLETE.





PANTING FROM HIS EXERTIONS, CAPTAIN BOYD JOINED THE SERGEANT...

WE COULDN'T DO MUCH IN OUR  
SECTOR... THE APPROACH ON THAT  
SIDE IS TOO OPEN... MUCH BETTER  
THIS SIDE... THOUGHT I WOULD  
WORK ROUND AND LEND  
A HAND.

WE'RE DOING  
WE'LL ENOUGH,  
SIR!



BUT CAPTAIN BOYD IGNORED THE SERGEANT'S RESENTFUL ATTITUDE...

THE P.I.A.T.'S THE THING FOR  
THIS JOB, SERGEANT... IT'LL  
PUT A BOMB EVEN THROUGH  
A TIGER'S ARMOUR.





## Line Of Fire

SIGHTING THE P.L.A.T. ON THE NEAREST OF THE THREE GERMAN TANKS, THE CAPTAIN SETTLED BEHIND THIS FEARSOME WEAPON WITH A TENSE EAGERNESS...

WHAT A CHANCE!  
WE'VE GOT 'EM  
COLD!

DON'T SHOOT,  
SIR. WE'VE NO  
SUPPORT WITHOUT  
MISTER ALLISON'S  
PARTY.

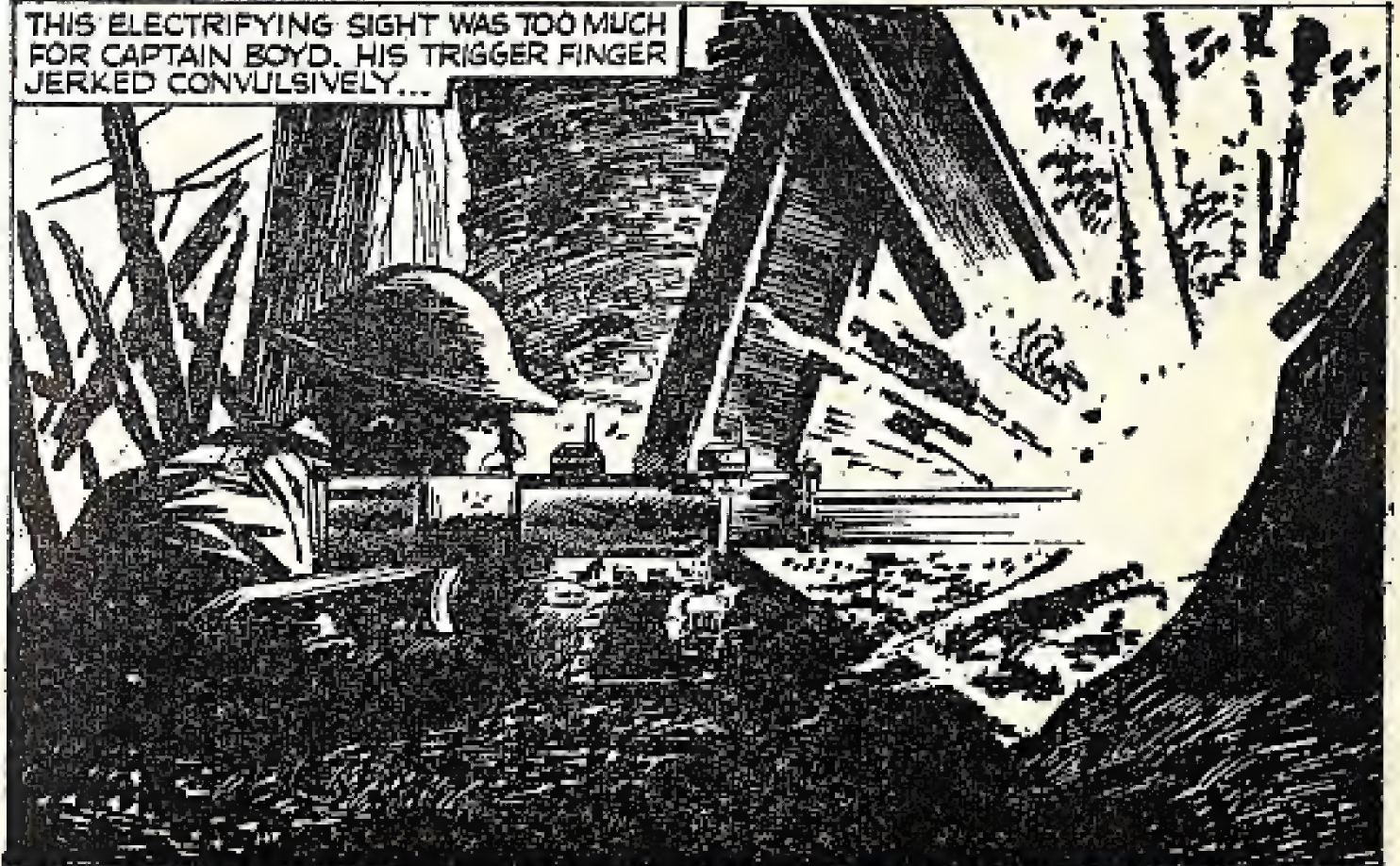
BUT LIEUTENANT ALLISON AND HIS MEN  
WERE MAKING THEIR OWN APPROACH  
TOWARDS THE ENEMY TANKS.

STILL NO SIGN  
OF BOYD. I'M SURPRISED  
HE HASN'T RUSHED  
THESE JERRIES  
SINGLE-HANDED!



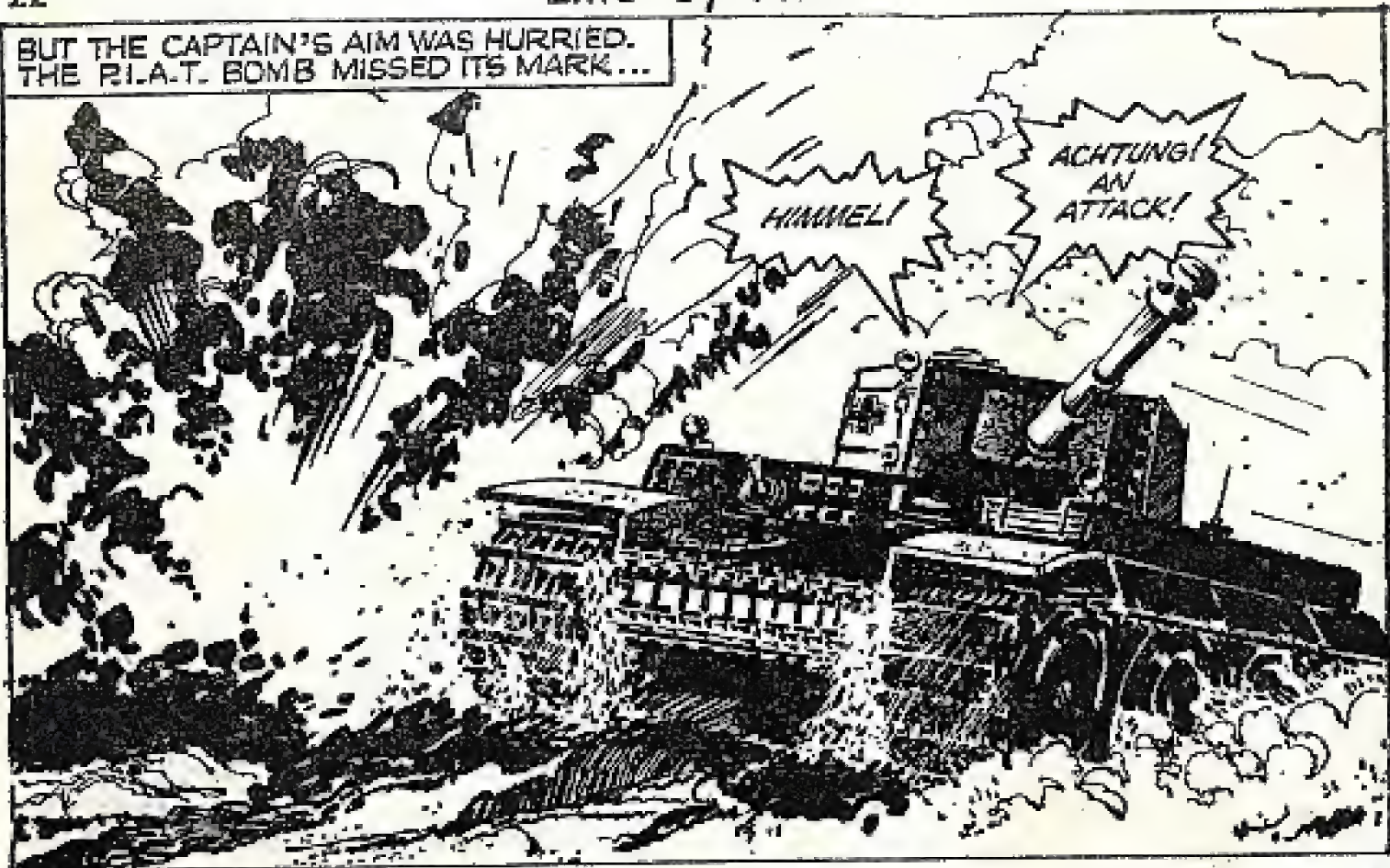
JUST THEN, THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENED. LIKE SOME PRIMEVAL MASTODON STIRRING FROM ITS LAIR, ONE OF THE ENEMY TANKS SHOOK ITSELF FREE OF RUBBLE AND EMERGED INTO PLAIN VIEW.

THIS ELECTRIFYING SIGHT WAS TOO MUCH FOR CAPTAIN BOYD. HIS TRIGGER FINGER JERKED CONVULSIVELY...

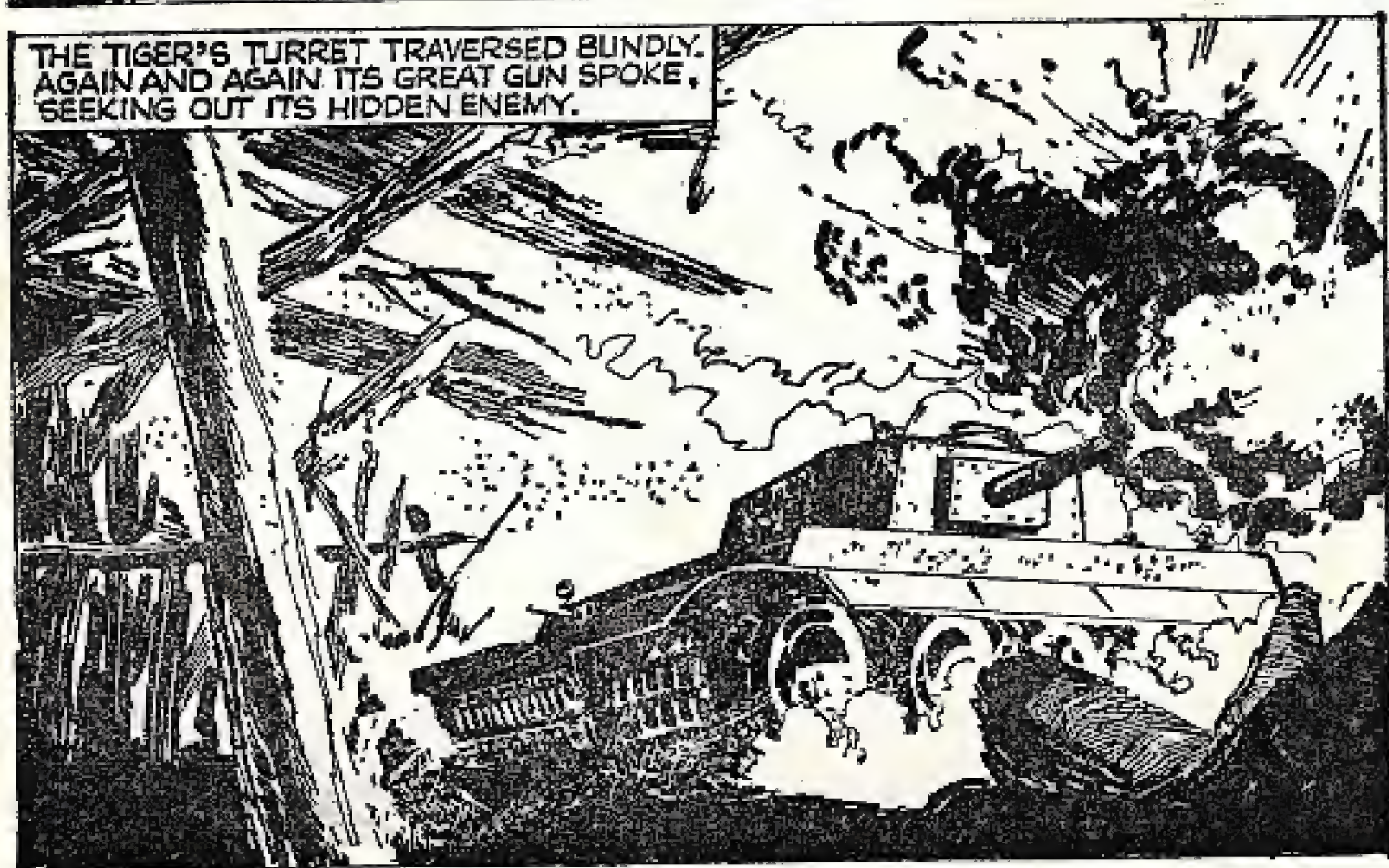




BUT THE CAPTAIN'S AIM WAS HURRIED.  
THE P.I.A.T. BOMB MISSED ITS MARK...



THE TIGER'S TURRET TRAVERSED BUNDLY.  
AGAIN AND AGAIN ITS GREAT GUN SPOKE,  
SEEKING OUT ITS HIDDEN ENEMY.





88 MILLIMETRE SHELLS TORE THROUGH THE RUINED HOUSES AND SPANDAU BULLETS RICOCHETED WILDLY FROM STONE WALLS. IT WAS ONE OF THESE WHICH FOUND ITS TRAGIC MARK...

MISTER ALLISON!  
HE'S HIT!

NOT FAR AWAY, CRAGG HEARD THE SOLDIER CRY OUT THAT HIS OFFICER WAS HIT. BLACK DISMAY SURGED THROUGH HIM...

DID YOU HEAR, SIR?  
MISTER ALLISON'S  
BEEN HIT!

WHA-AT?



## Line Of Fire



GERGEANT CRAGG SPUN ROUND ON  
HIS MEN, HIS VOICE HARSH WITH  
EMOTION.

EVANS - SEE HOW MISTER  
ALLISON IS. THE REST OF  
YOU, FOLLOW ME... WE'LL  
GIVE THOSE TANKS  
HELL!

WAIT!  
YOU ARE NOT  
LEADING THIS  
ATTACK, CRAGG...  
I AM!





BOYD LEAD THAT ATTACK WITH ALMOST  
FRANTIC RECKLESSNESS.



SCORNING THE HAIL OF ENEMY FIRE, BOYD  
ONCE AGAIN LET FLY WITH HIS PLAT. HIS OWN  
VOICE ROARED IN COMPANY.





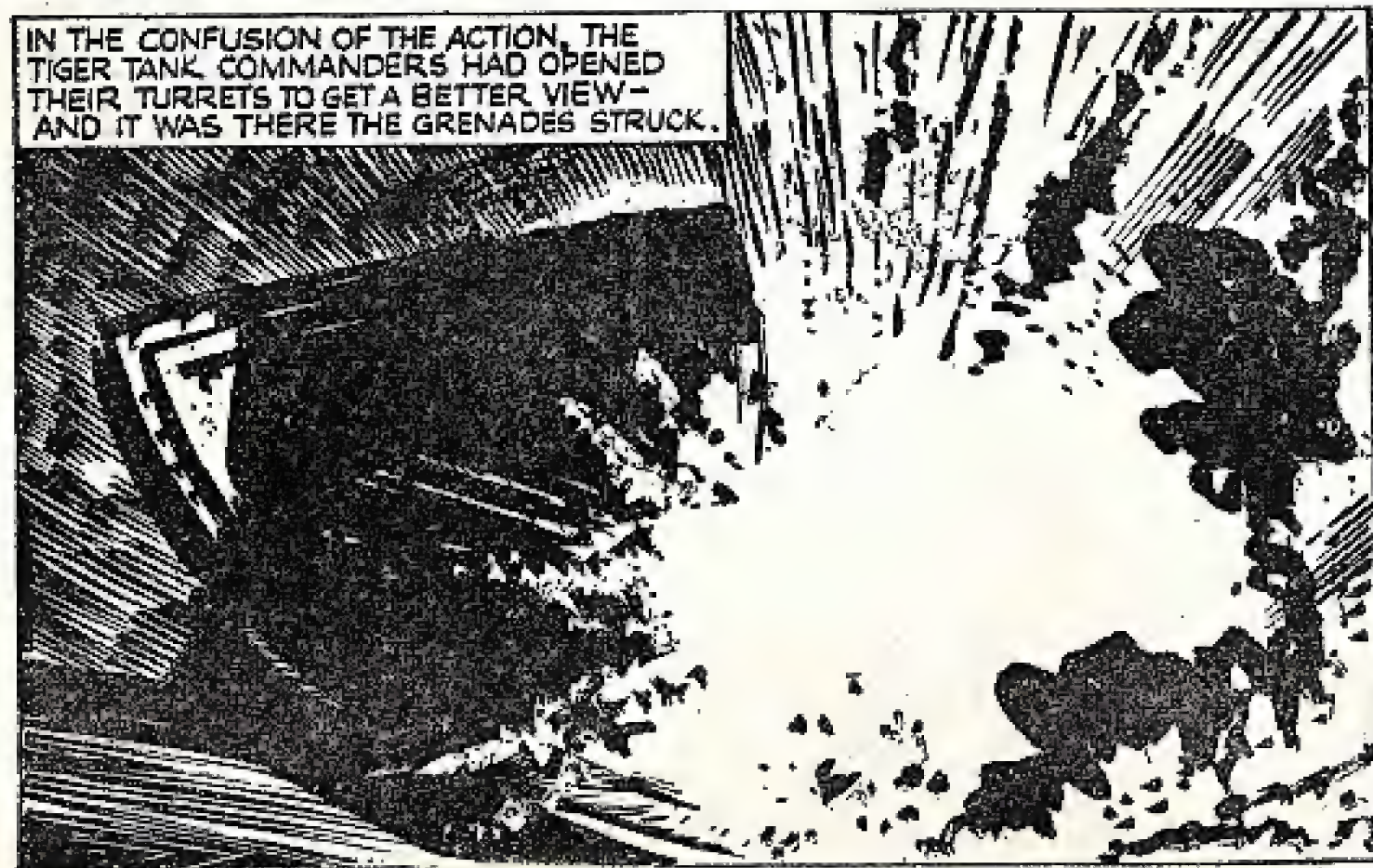
## Line Of Fire

DODGING UNDER THE ENEMY'S MACHINE-GUN FIRE, THE MEN CLOSED IN ON THE STEEL MONSTERS.

LET 'EM HAVE IT!



IN THE CONFUSION OF THE ACTION, THE TIGER TANK COMMANDERS HAD OPENED THEIR TURRETS TO GET A BETTER VIEW—AND IT WAS THERE THE GRENADES STRUCK.





WHERE THE BATTLE WAS THICKEST,  
THERE WAS CAPTAIN BOYD...



IN ANOTHER MINUTE IT WAS ALL OVER.  
THEN, AMIDST THE SMOKE AND CRACKLE  
OF BURNING TANKS, BOYD FOUND  
HIMSELF CONFRONTED BY AN ENRAGED  
SERGEANT CRAGG...



HIS RUGGED FACE GREY WITH DISTRESS, SERGEANT CRAGG  
STARED AFTER THE STRETCHER-BEARERS AS THEY CARRIED  
AWAY THE STILL FORM OF THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT.





## Line Of Fire.

THE SEEMING INDIFFERENCE OF THE REPLY STUNG THE SERGEANT TO OPEN ANGER...

I TELL YOU, YES!  
YOUR CONFOUNDED  
R.I.A.T GAVE THE GAME  
AWAY... AND THEY GOT  
MISTER ALLISON.  
EVERYBODY SAW  
THAT!



BOYD SEEMED TOO TAKEN ABACK TO SPEAK.

REALISING HE HAD GONE TOO FAR, CRAGG WENT ON IN CALMER TONES...

I MUST SAY, SIR, THAT WHEN YOU  
DELEGATE A JOB YOU SHOULD LEAVE  
IT ALONE... AND... AND NOT  
COME INTERFERING.

THAT WILL  
BE ENOUGH, SERGEANT-  
QUITE ENOUGH!



THERE WAS A CHILLING RING IN THE REPLY WHICH BODED ILL FOR SERGEANT WILLIAM CRAGG...



# Chapter 3. BREAKING POINT

BUT THERE WAS LITTLE TIME FOR MOURNING OR CELEBRATION IN THE PUNISHING ADVANCE ALONG THE CALABRIAN COAST ROAD. THE CAPITULATION OF ITALY, FIVE DAYS AFTER THE ALLIED LANDINGS, HAD BEEN FOLLOWED BY BITTER FIGHTING AT SALERNO, WHICH HAD FALLEN TO A COMBINED SEA AND LAND ASSAULT.

THESE  
EYTIES AREN'T  
SO DUMB!

YEAH,  
THE WAR'S  
OVER FOR  
THEM!



ALL EYES TURNED EXPECTANTLY TOWARDS NAPLES, SIXTY MILES TO THE NORTH. BUT THE TASK WAS NOT AN EASY ONE, AS BRIGADIER BENNETT EXPLAINED...

FURTHER ADVANCE IS RISKY  
UNTIL WE HAVE DRIVEN OFF  
HEAVY GERMAN PRESSURE  
AROUND THE BRITISH-  
HELD AIRFIELD AT  
PONTE CORVINO.





## Line Of Fire



WHEN HE HEARD HIS OWN NAME CALLED, CAPTAIN BOYD FELT A STRANGE PANG, HALF FEAR, HALF-PRIDE. HE HAD BEEN CHOSEN!

SERGEANT CRAGG, BUSY AMONGST THE TRUCKS IN THE VEHICLE PARK, HEARD THE BRIGADIER'S PARTING WORDS TO CAPTAIN BOYD.





BY THE EVENING, THE RELIEF FORCE HAD MOVED THIRTY MILES INLAND TO THE DEFENCE OF PONTECORVINO AIRFIELD.



BY DARK, CRAGG'S MEN HAD DUG THEMSELVES IN. ONE THING PLEASED THEM MIGHTILY, THE RECENT ISSUE OF THE P.I.A.T. TO PLATOONS.





A SHORT WHILE LATER, CRAGG WAS SUMMONED TO THE FIELD TELEPHONE. THE TENSE TONES OF CAPTAIN BOYD GRATED IN HIS EAR.

CRAGG? LISTEN - THERE'S A REPORT OF ENEMY TANK MOVEMENT TO OUR FRONT. WATCH OUT!

VERY GOOD, SIR!



BOYD ISSUED A STRING OF URGENT INSTRUCTIONS. AT HIS FINAL WORDS, SERGEANT CRAGG'S PATIENT SMILE TOOK ON A SARDONIC TWIST.

I'LL LEAVE YOU TO USE YOUR OWN INITIATIVE, CRAGG.

I'LL BE SURPRISED IF HE DOES!





SERGEANT CRAGG HAD ALREADY RECONNOITRED THE GROUND AHEAD. NOW, AS THE MOON ROSE, HE GAVE HIS ORDERS...

WILLCOX— TAKE YOUR SECTION AND WAIT IN THAT CLUMP OF TREES. IF JERRY MAKES FOR US, YOU'VE GOT HIM NICELY IN THE FLANK!

GOOD IDEA, SARGE!



SPRINTING THE HUNDRED YARDS OR SO TO THEIR COVER, WILLCOX AND HIS SECTION SETTLED DOWN WATCHFULLY.

THE SARGE DON'T MISS NOTHING, DOES HE?

NEITHER WILL WE ... WITH THESE P.I.A.T.S.!





## Line Of Fire

THE HOURS DRAGGED BY. BRIGHT MOONLIGHT FLOODED THE SILENT SCENE. THEN CRAGG'S KEEN EYES SUDDENLY CAUGHT A DISTANT BLUR OF MOVEMENT...

HULLO... LOOKS LIKE... YES! TANKS... AND COMING THIS WAY!



NEXT MOMENT, THERE WAS A SQUEAL OF BRAKES BEHIND HIM...

IT'S BOYD... OF ALL THE FUSSY, INTERFERING...!





IN RESPONSE TO BOYD'S GUERULOUS INQUIRIES, CRAGG TOLD HIS COMPANY COMMANDER OF THE DEFENSIVE MEASURES HE HAD TAKEN... BUT BOYD SHOOK HIS HEAD IRRITABLY...

BRING WILLCOX AND THOSE MEN BACK.

BUT THEY...

I SAID, BRING THEM BACK!

SEETHING WITH IMPOTENT EXASPERATION, SERGEANT CRAGG DESPATCHED A RUNNER TO CORPORAL WILLCOX. THEN HE TURNED TO THE SENIOR MAN...

ONE MINUTE YOU'RE DEMANDING INITIATIVE, SIR, AND THE NEXT YOU'RE CHUCKING IT BACK AT ME. WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

DON'T SHOUT AT ME!  
I WARN YOU, CRAGG...  
YOU'RE HEADING  
FOR TROUBLE!



## Line Of Fire.

HEARING THE ALTERCATION, CRAGG'S MEN BECAME PREY TO UNEASINESS. IT SHOWED IN THE FACE OF THE RUNNER WHO CAME PANTING TO WILLCOX'S SIDE...

SARGE SAYS TO GET BACK ... AND QUICK!

GET BACK -  
WHAT THE HECK  
FOR?



IN GRUMBLING RESIGNATION, WILLCOX DID AS HE WAS TOLD. BUT AS THEY BEGAN TO CROSS THE OPEN SPACE, A SUDDEN CRACKLE OF MACHINE-GUN FIRE GREETED THEM.

LOOK OUT!

JERRY  
TANKS!



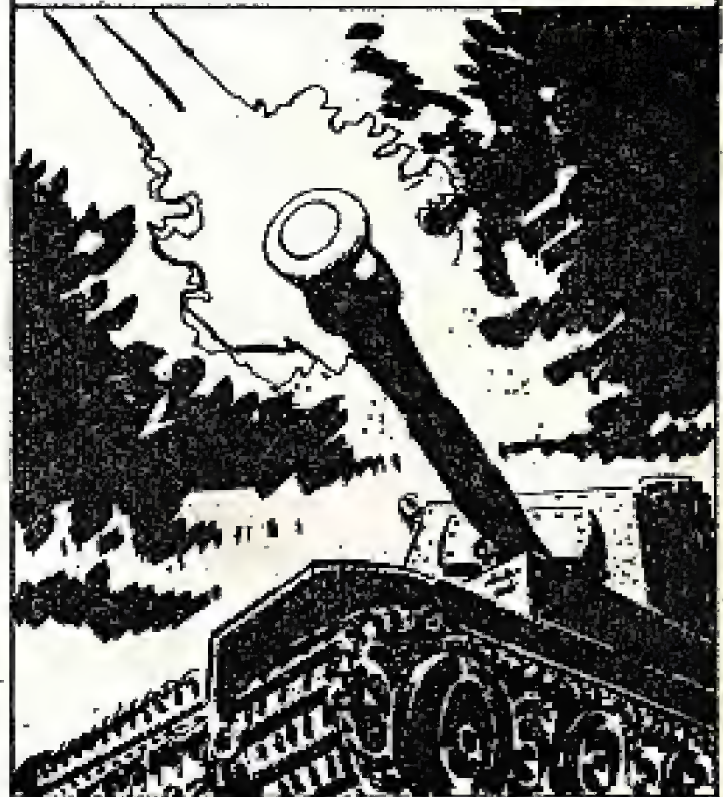


AT THE SOUND OF FIRING, SERGEANT CRAGG WHIPPED HIS BINOCULARS UP TO HIS EYES — AND GROANED AT WHAT HE SAW.

IT'S WILLCOX'S MEN! THEY'RE CAUGHT IN THE OPEN!



SIMULTANEOUSLY, THE TANK'S MAIN ARMAMENT, 75 MILLIMETRE GUNS, RANGED ON TO THE MAIN DEFENSIVE POSITION HELD BY CRAGG'S MEN...



ALTHOUGH THE ATTACK HAD BEEN HALF-EXPECTED, THE HEATED ARGUMENT BETWEEN BOYD AND CRAGG HAD UNSETTLED THE MEN AND WASTED CRITICAL TIME.

WE HAVEN'T BEEN GIVEN THE RANGE!

JUST KEEP SHOOTING!







THOSE THAT SURVIVED FELL BACK IN DISORDER ACROSS THE AIRFIELD. FOR THE DISMAYED CAPTAIN BOYD, THE CLANKING ADVANCE OF THE PANZERS WAS THE DEATH-RATTLE OF DEFEAT.





THE CHILL DAWN SAW THE IGNOMINIOUS AND COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF THE AIRFIELD'S DEFENCES. DISGUSTED MEN GRUMBLED BITTERLY TO EACH OTHER.

WE SHOULD HAVE NAILED THOSE TANKS. WHAT THE BLAZES WENT WRONG?

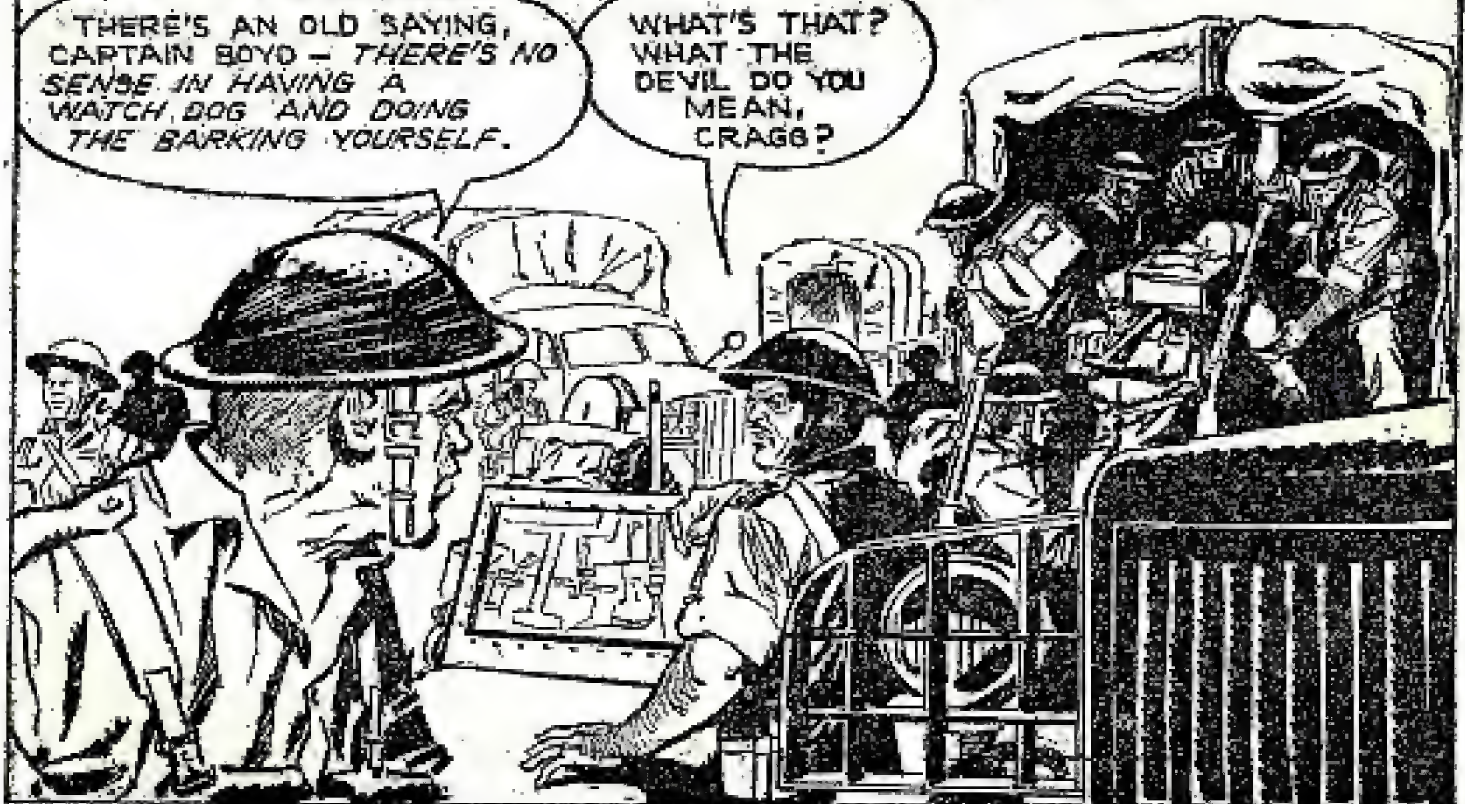
SEARCH ME!



THE COMPANY ARRIVED BACK AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS. AS THE MEN DEBUSSSED, THE ROVING EYE OF SERGEANT CRAGG FASTENED UPON THE DISPIRITED CAPTAIN BOYD.

THERE'S AN OLD SAYING, CAPTAIN BOYD - THERE'S NO SENSE IN HAVING A WATCH DOG AND DOING THE BARKING YOURSELF.

WHAT'S THAT? WHAT THE DEVIL DO YOU MEAN, CRAGG?







THE N.C.O. KNEW HE WAS STICKING HIS NECK OUT TOO FAR, BUT HE COULD CONTAIN HIMSELF NO LONGER. BUT THE FURIOUS OUTBURST HE EXPECTED DID NOT COME. WITH A CURIOUS CHOKING SOUND, CAPTAIN BOYD TURNED ABRUPTLY AWAY.





## Chapter 4. *THREAT to the FLANK*

THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND WAS QUICK TO SEE THE DANGER IN THE ALLIED SEIZURE OF THE HARBOUR AT SALERNO. THEIR REACTION WAS IMMEDIATE AND POWERFUL. A PANZER DIVISION WAS ORDERED TO ATTACK WITH THE OBJECT OF DRIVING A WEDGE BETWEEN THE ALLIED COASTAL FORCES.

OUR ARMOUR WILL FIND A WAY THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS AND FALL UPON THE ENEMY'S RIGHT FLANK... AND THRUST THEM BACK INTO THE SEA!



THE PANZER DIVISION, ONCE DESTROYED AT STALINGRAD, BUT NOW RE-FORMED, INTO A MIGHTIER FIGHTING MACHINE THAN EVER, PREPARED FOR BATTLE.

MOUNT UP...  
MOVE!





WELL AWARE THAT SUCH A THREAT MIGHT DEVELOP, THE ALLIES SENT OUT A FLANKING FORCE INTO THE MOUNTAINS UNDER THE COMMAND OF A BRITISH COLONEL.

OUR JOB IS TO COMB THESE MOUNTAIN PASSES AND BLOCK ANY ATTEMPT BY THE ENEMY TO FILTER THROUGH. NOW, IF THE OFFICERS WILL GATHER ROUND...



AMONGST THOSE TROOPS GUARDING THE TORTUOUS DEFILES OF THE CALABRIAN HEIGHTS WAS CAPTAIN BOYD'S COMPANY. AND WITH THE RECENT DEFEAT AT THE AIRFIELD STILL FRESH IN HIS MIND, SERGEANT CRAGG FOUND HIS EYES CONSTANTLY STRAYING TO THE STRANGE MAN WHO WAS THEIR LEADER.

HE HARDLY SAYS A WORD... YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT HE'S THINKING.





PRESENTLY, THE CAPTAIN CALLED CRAGG OVER. THERE WAS AN EDGE OF EXCITEMENT IN HIS VOICE.

LOOK, SERGEANT —  
GERMAN TANKS... THREE  
OF THEM!

COULD BE A  
RECCE PARTY FOR A  
LARGER FORCE.

EAGERLY, BOYD LED THE PARTY,  
SCRAMBLING DOWN THE SLOPES...

WE MUSTN'T LET  
THOSE TANKS OUT  
OF OUR SIGHT...  
HURRY!

SERGEANT CRAGG'S GUESS WAS RIGHT. THE TRIO OF ENEMY TANKS WAS PROBING A PATH THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS.

THIS LOOKS PROMISING.  
SCHULTZ — ADVANCE!

JAWOHL, HERR  
LEUTNANT!





## Line Of Fire

CAPTAIN BOYD WAVED HIS MEN TO COVER JUST AS THE TANKS MOVED ON AGAIN.



AS THE TENSE MOMENTS WENT BY, THE DISTANT CLANK OF ARMOUR GREW TO A STEADY RUMBLE. STEADILY, THE P.I.A.T.S RANGED ON THE ENEMY VEHICLES. THEN THE CRASH OF THIS DEADLY NEW ARTILLERY ECHOED AND RE-ECHOED ALONG THE MOUNTAIN PASS.





THE EFFECT, EVEN ON THE THICKEST  
ARMOUR PLATE, WAS CATASTROPHIC...



AS THE BRITISH FOUND THE RANGE, SO THEIR SHATTERING  
ANTI-TANK WEAPONS WROUGHT TERRIBLE HAVOC...



ONLY ONE TANK SURVIVED THAT  
FEARFUL BARRAGE.



## Line Of Fire

DAZED AND SHAKEN, THE TANK CREWS FROM THE KNOCKED-OUT PANZERS STUMBLERD FORWARD WITH TWITCHING HANDS RAISED IN SUBMISSION...

WE'LL QUESTION THESE MEN, CRAGG.

YES, SIR.



BUT THE PRISONERS WERE SULLENLY SILENT AND THIS SEEMED TO STRETCH THE CAPTAIN'S TAUT NERVES TO SNAPPING POINT...

STUBBORN SWINE! I'M SURE THERE'S A STRONG FORCE OF ENEMY TANKS SOMEWHERE NEAR.

... AND THAT THIRD TANK WENT BACK TO TIP THEM OFF ABOUT US!





SEEMINGLY UNABLE TO STAND STILL AND MARSHAL HIS THOUGHTS PROPERLY, CAPTAIN BOYD HAD THEM ALL SCRAMBLING ONCE MORE TO THE HEIGHTS. THERE, HE FEVERISHLY SCANNED THE CRAGGY DEFILES BELOW.

THERE THEY ARE!  
PANZER TANKS!  
HOW MANY?

MAYBE A DOZEN...  
COULD BE  
MORE.



CAPTAIN BOYD'S IMPATIENCE NOW TURNED TO A BURNING EXCITEMENT. THE SERGEANT EYED HIM NARROWLY...

IF WE COULD HANDLE  
THIS OURSELVES, CRAGG —  
WHAT A FEATHER FOR  
THE COMPANY!

YOU MEAN... WHAT  
A FEATHER FOR  
CAPTAIN BOYD!





SEEING THE STRANGE, WILD LOOK IN THE OTHER'S EYE, CRAGG BECAME UNEASY...

BUT THERE MIGHT BE MORE TANKS BEYOND THE ESCARPMENT, SIR. SURELY, WE SHOULD REPORT THEM.

RUBBISH! ALL THAT WORRIES ME IS, WHICH WAY WILL THE ENEMY COME?



PLAINLY RACKED BY INDECISION, CAPTAIN BOYD AT LAST MADE UP HIS MIND.

WE'LL HAVE TO SPLIT FORCES, SERGEANT. YOU TAKE A HALF-COMPANY AND WATCH OUT ON THAT NORTH DEFILE. THE REST OF US WILL TAKE THE SOUTH ONE.





CRAGG OBEYED, BUT WITH MISGIVINGS. AS HE LED HIS MEN AWAY, A FAMILIAR INJUNCTION BROUGHT A SARDONIC GRIN TO HIS TANNED FACE.

I RELY ON YOU,  
CRAGG... USE  
YOUR HEAD.

NOW WHERE HAVE  
I HEARD THAT  
BEFORE!



FREE OF BOYD'S FUSSY LEADERSHIP, SERGEANT CRAGG LED THE RUGGED DESCENT WITH LIGHTER HEART...

AT LAST I CAN FIGHT  
IN MY OWN WAY!





## Line Of Fire



THE REASON FOR THE NAVY'S PRESENCE ON THAT LOFTY PERCH WAS SIMPLE - IT WAS A FORWARD OBSERVATION POST.





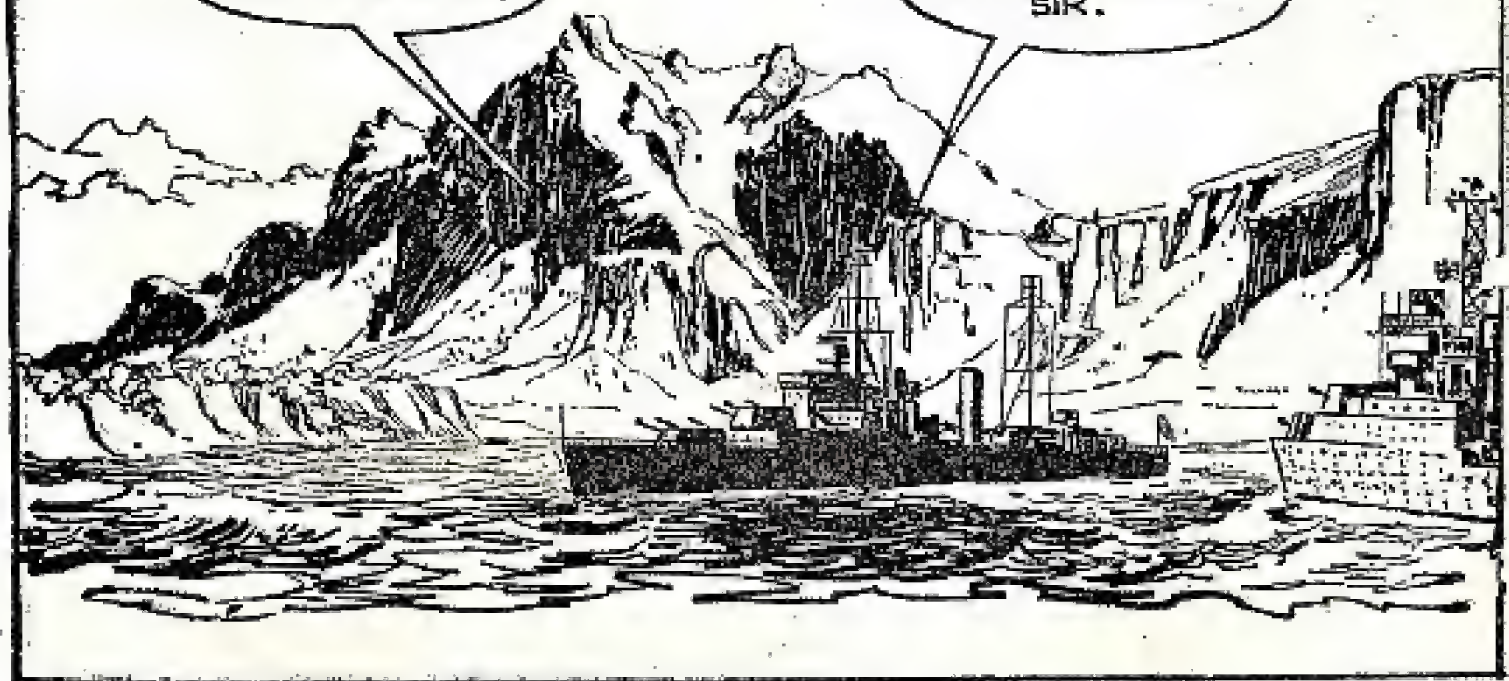
IT WAS NOW SERGEANT CRAGG'S TURN TO FEEL THE PANGS OF INDECISION. SHOULD HE TELL THESE NAVY MEN OF THE ENEMY'S APPROACH AND SO SPOIL CAPTAIN BOYD'S FIERCE BID FOR HONOUR...?



OFF-SHORE, UNITS OF THE POWERFUL BRITISH FLEET STEAMED PATIENTLY BACK AND FORTH, THEIR MASSIVE GUNS TRAINED EXPECTANTLY ON THE NEARBY MOUNTAIN SLOPES.

NO TARGETS  
YET, CAPTAIN?

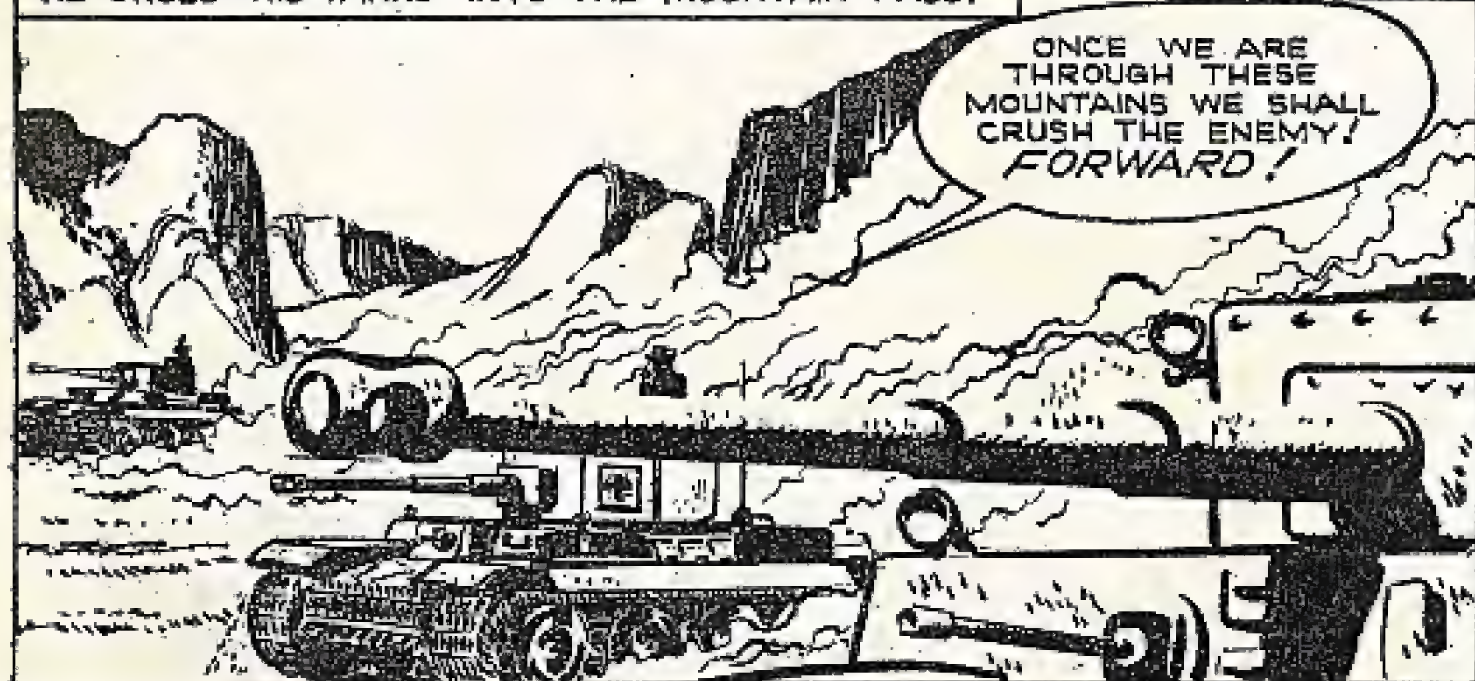
NOTHING  
COMING THROUGH,  
SIR.





## Chapter 5. *The BARRAGE*

MEANWHILE, THE COMMANDER OF THE PANZER DIVISION FANCIED HE SAW THE REWARDS OF HIS GENERAL'S BOLD STRATEGY. EXULTANTLY, HE URGED HIS TANKS INTO THE MOUNTAIN PASS.



BY NOW SERGEANT CRAGG HAD MADE UP HIS MIND. IF THE ENEMY TANKS IGNORED BOYD'S DEFILE AND ADVANCED DOWN THE OTHER, THEN THEY WERE BETTER LEFT TO THE NAVY'S GUNS.





BUT HALF AN HOUR PASSED AND THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THE ENEMY TANKS. CRAGG BECAME WORRIED...

NOTHING IN SIGHT YET?

MAYBE THEY'VE TAKEN THE SOUTH SIDE, SIR. I WONDER IF CAPTAIN BOYD IS OKAY?



SUDDENLY LIEUTENANT BURKE, THE NAVAL OFFICER, BARKED A WARNING AND ALL WAS INSTANT EXCITEMENT...

HERE THEY COME! BY HEAVENS, LOOK!

THERE'S DOZENS OF THEM!

TARGET SIGHTED, EVANS! STAND BY!

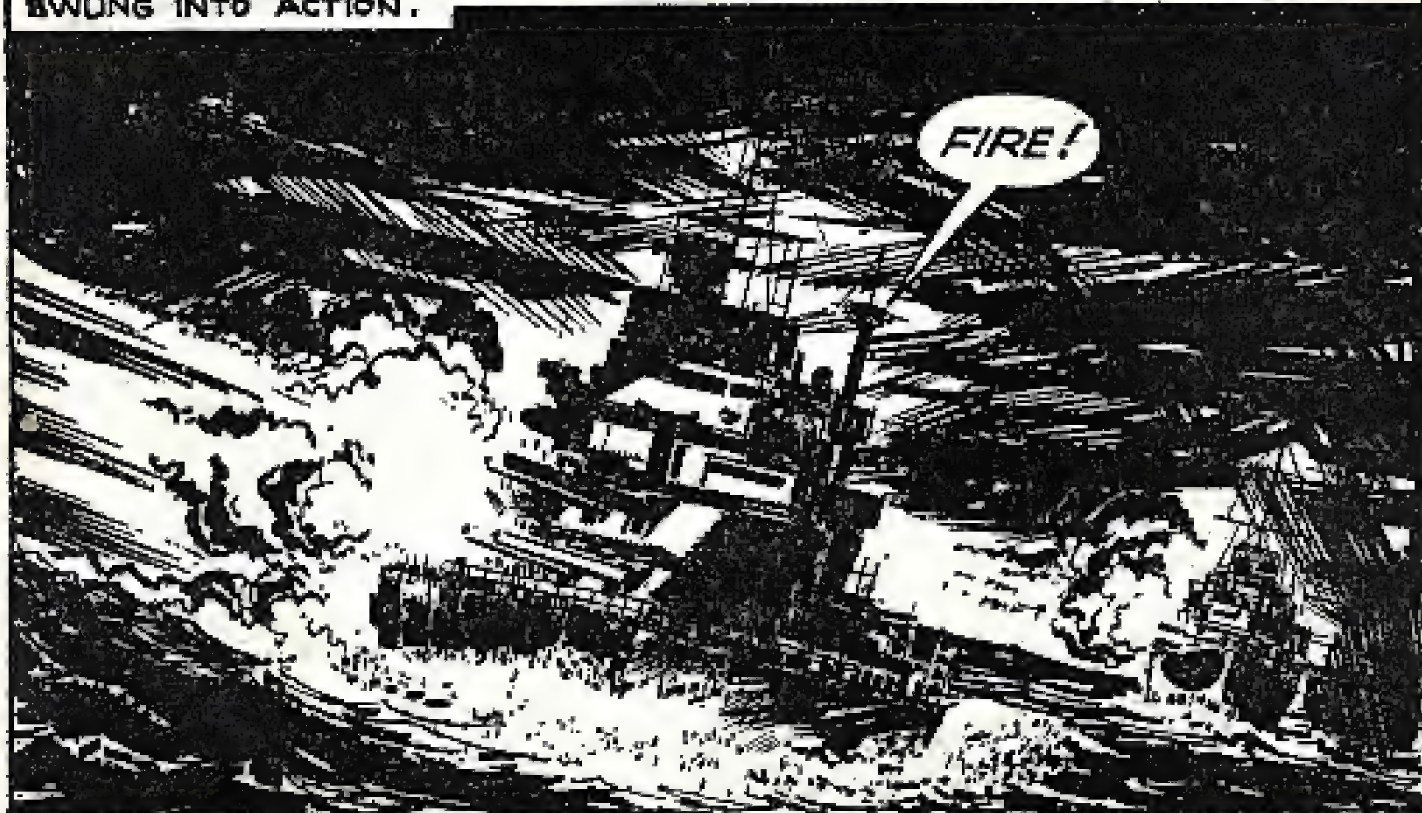
AYE, AYE, SIR!





## Line Of Fire

IN SECONDS, THE NEWS WAS FLASHED TO THE RADIO ROOM ABOARD THE ADMIRAL'S FLAGSHIP. THE IMMENSE MECHANISM OF NAVAL GUNNERY SWUNG INTO ACTION.



BEFORE THE THUNDEROUS CRASH OF THE GUNS COULD REACH THE MOUNTAIN SLOPES, THERE CAME THE SINISTER WHISPER OF 15-INCH SHELLS THAT PRECEDED THE CRASHING EXPLOSIONS.



THE FIRST SALVO WAS A NEAR MISS BUT ITS OMINOUS MEANING STRUCK COLD FEAR INTO EVERY GERMAN HEART...



WITH EARS RINGING FROM THE VIOLENT ECHOES, THE OBSERVERS ON THE LEDGE HIGH ABOVE FELT THEIR PULSES RACE... BUT FOR VERY DIFFERENT REASONS...

A LITTLE WIDE!

WE'LL DO BETTER THAN THAT!

THERE'S MEN DOWN THERE... SURELY IT'S NOT...



CRAGG CLAPPED THE FIELD GLASSES TO HIS EYES AND GASPED AT WHAT HE SAW...

GOOD GRIEF! IT'S CAPTAIN BOYO AND HIS MEN! THEY'LL BE BLOWN TO PIECES!





## Line Of Fire

BUT ALREADY LIEUTENANT BURKE WAS COOLLY CORRECTING THE SHOOT.

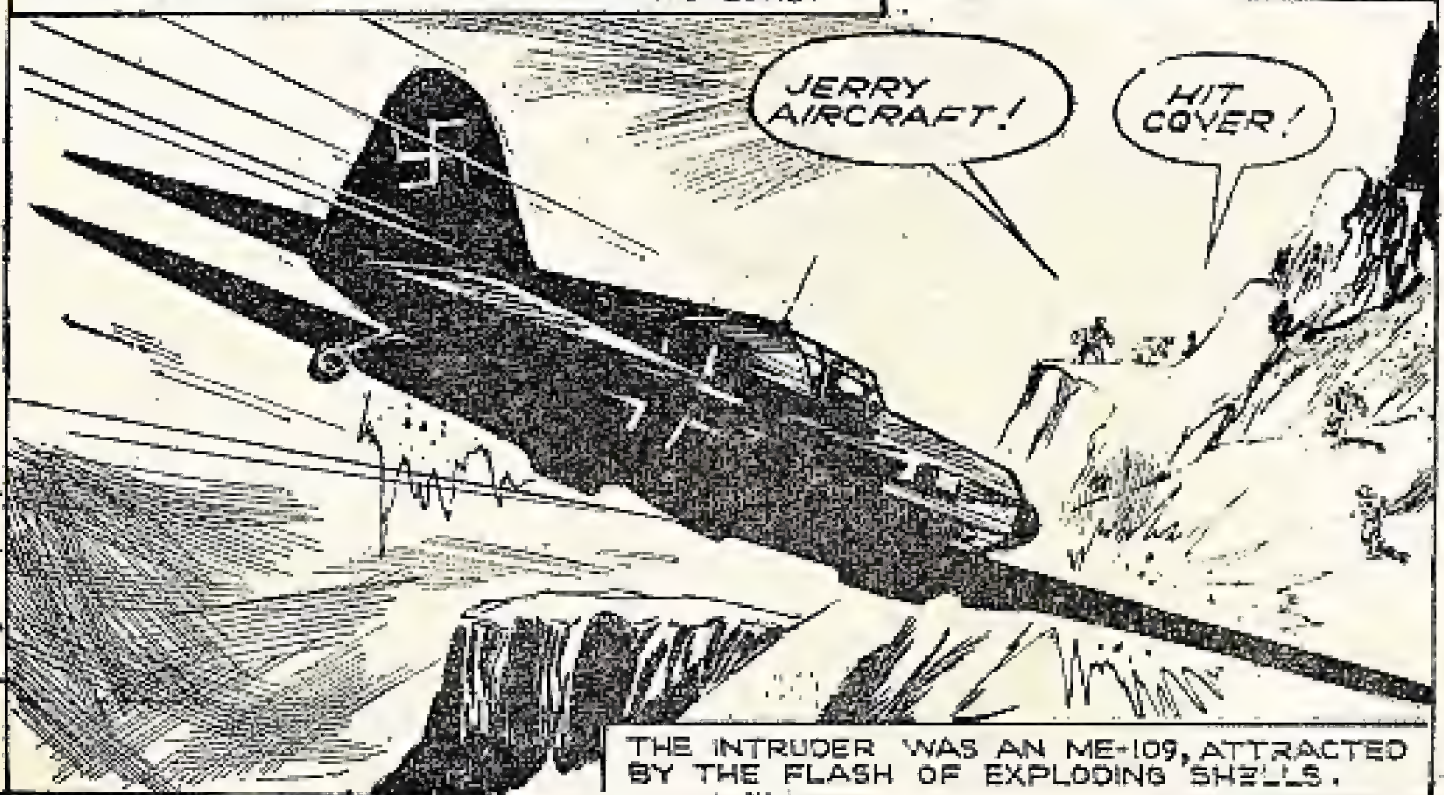
STOP! STOP THE SHOOTING!  
MY OWN COMPANY'S DOWN THERE  
...CAPTAIN BOYD AND THE  
OTHERS!



BUT BEFORE THE STARTLED BURKE COULD CANCEL HIS CORRECTIONS, THERE WAS A THUNDEROUS ROAR OF AN AERO ENGINE... AND THE HARSH CLATTER OF CANNON AND MACHINE-GUNS.

JERRY  
AIRCRAFT!

HIT  
COVER!



THE INTRUDER WAS AN ME-109, ATTRACTED BY THE FLASH OF EXPLODING SHELLS.



THE MESSERSCHMITT'S CANNON-FIRE FOUND NO HUMAN TARGET BUT SLAMMED INTO THE ROCK FACE AND CAUSED A SMALL AVALANCHE OF LOOSENED ROCK.



SERGEANT CRAGG WAS THE FIRST TO REALISE THE IMPLICATION OF THE SHATTERED RADIO LINK WITH THE FLEET ...





ONCE AGAIN THE THUNDER OF A NAVAL BROADSIDE BURST UPON SEA AND MOUNTAIN...



...AND ONCE AGAIN A TERRIBLE SALVO OF DESTRUCTION FELL UPON THAT ROCKY DEFILE - AND THIS TIME IT WAS DEADLY ACCURATE.



AS THE ECHOES DIED AWAY IN THE HILLS AND THE SMOKE OF CHAOS CLEARED, SERGEANT CRAGG ANXIOUSLY SCANNED THE SLOPES BELOW.

THERE'S CAPTAIN BOYD... HE LOOKS HURT!



BUT WE THOUGHT HE WAS ROUND THE OTHER SIDE, SARGE.

WHAT THE HECK WAS HE DOING DOWN THERE?



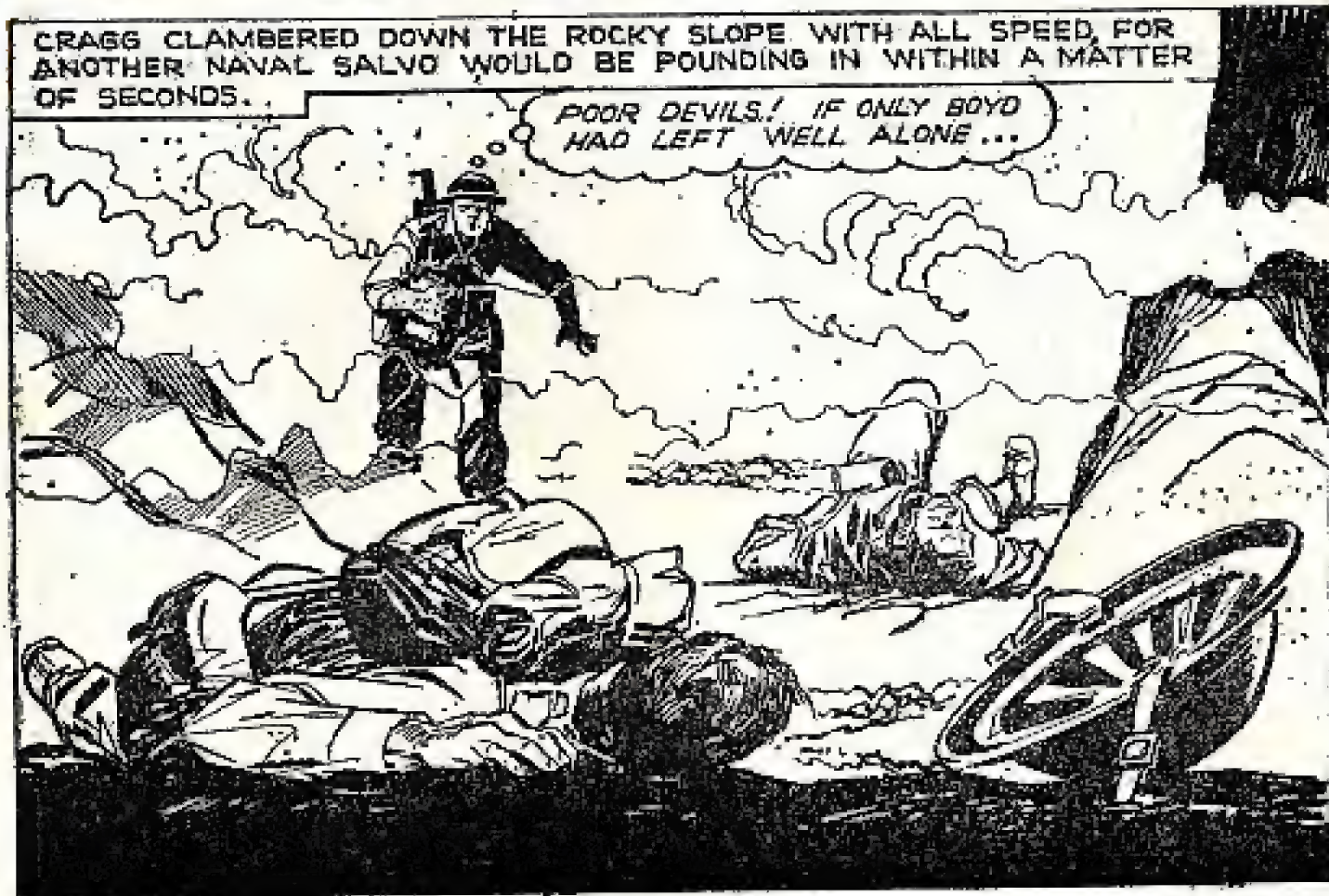
THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND THE ANSWER.

IT LOOKS AS IF  
BOYD HAS INTERFERED  
ONCE TOO OFTEN.

GIVE ME THAT  
PI.A.T., AND YOU LOT  
STAY WHERE YOU  
ARE!

CRAGG CLAMBERED DOWN THE ROCKY SLOPE WITH ALL SPEED, FOR ANOTHER NAVAL SALVO WOULD BE POUNDING IN WITHIN A MATTER OF SECONDS.

POOR DEVILS! IF ONLY BOYD  
HAD LEFT WELL ALONE...





PANTING, HE REACHED BOYD'S SIDE. DESPITE HIS OBVIOUS PAIN, THE OFFICER COULD RAISE A WRY SMILE.

HAD A NOTION AFTER ALL THAT THOSE TANKS WOULD COME THIS WAY. KNEW YOU'D NEED MY HELP, CRAGG.

LISTEN, SIR, I'VE GOT TO MOVE YOU... RIGHT NOW!



CRAGG LIFTED THE GROANING CAPTAIN AND MADE FOR SAFER GROUND. BEHIND HIM, THE GRIND AND SCREAM OF TANK TRACKS TOLD OF THE ENEMY'S FRANTIC EFFORTS TO ESCAPE THE FEARFUL DEATH TRAP.

GAINING BETTER SHELTER, CRAGG WAS JUST EASING THE DESPERATELY WOUNDED OFFICER TO THE GROUND WHEN BULLETS BEGAN TO CHIP AT THE CLIFF FACE ABOUT THEM.



NAVY GUNS, CRAGG?

THAT'S RIGHT, SIR... AND THERE'S MORE COMING!

HANG IT! ONE OF THE JERRIES HAS GOT A BEAD ON US!



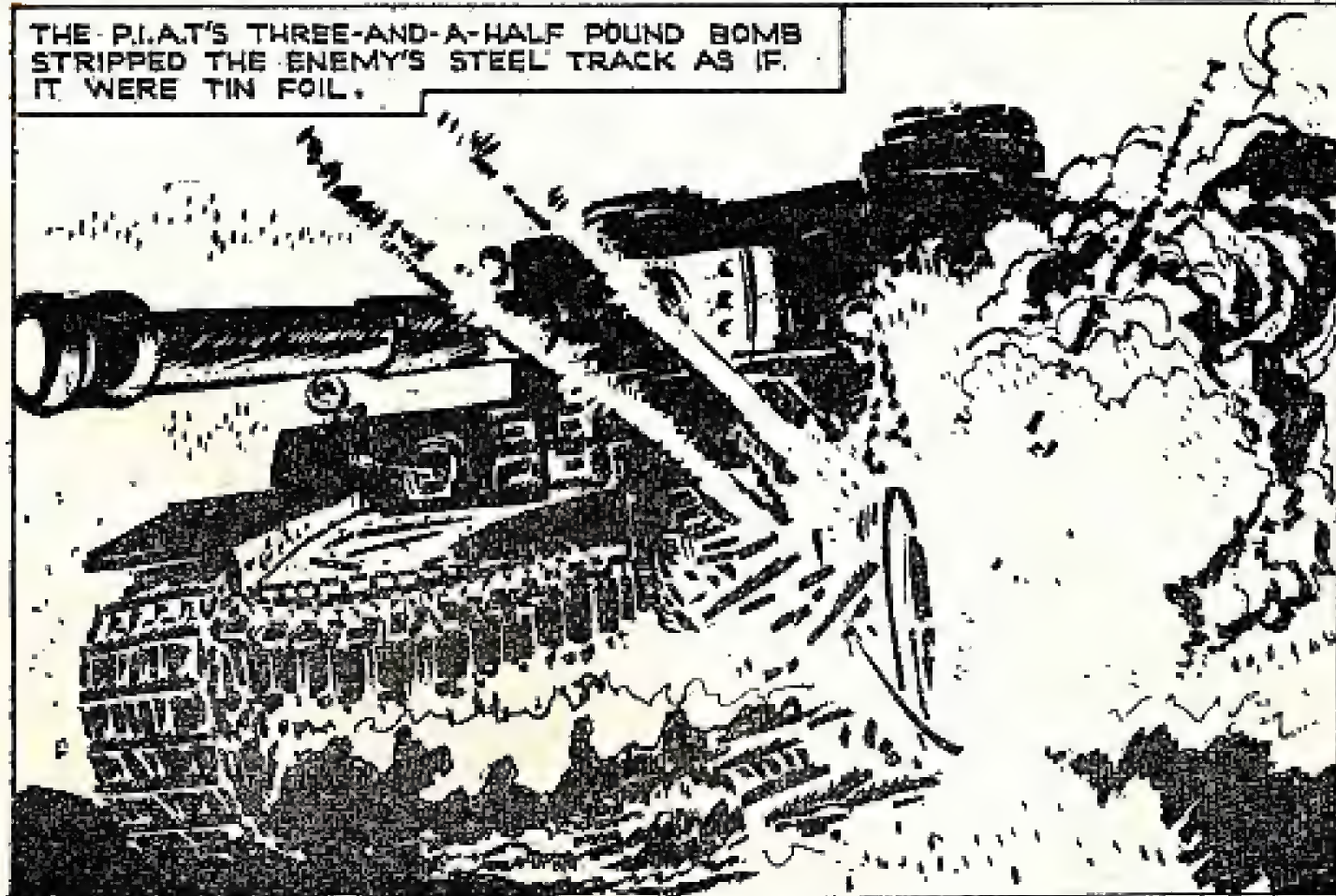


SERGEANT CRAGG UNLIMBERED THE P.I.A.T. GUN FROM HIS SHOULDER AND FLUNG HIMSELF FLAT...

NOW, JERRY... YOU CAN HAVE A FIGHT IF YOU WANT IT!



THE P.I.A.T.'S THREE-AND-A-HALF POUND BOMB STRIPPED THE ENEMY'S STEEL TRACK AS IF IT WERE TIN FOIL.





CRAGG'S SECOND SHOT DELIVERED THE COUP DE GRACE...



THEN CAME THE NAVAL BOMBARDMENT, CRUSHING THE TANKS OF THE PROUD PANZER DIVISION INTO SO MUCH SCRAP IRON.

*DONNER UND BLITZEN!*  
BACK - GET BACK OR  
WE SHALL ALL BE  
DESTROYED!





MEANWHILE CAPTAIN BOYD, NOW DEATHLY PALE, WAS STRUGGLING TO SPEAK. BENDING LOW TO HEAR, CRAGG WAS SURPRISED TO SEE THE PEACEFUL EXPRESSION INTO WHICH THE OFFICER'S FACE HAD RELAXED.

I DID IT, CRAGG...  
I CAUGHT THOSE TANKS  
JUST IN TIME.



THE MONTHS OF GNAWING ANXIETY WERE OVER FOR CAPTAIN BOYD. HE SEEMED TO HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT IT WAS NAVAL GUNS THAT HAD WIPED OUT THE LARGE FORCE OF ENEMY ARMOUR. HIS WORDS CAME JERKILY.

YOU'LL TELL THEM, CRAGG,  
WON'T YOU? IT WAS MY  
COMMAND THAT FOUND —  
AND DESTROYED THOSE  
PANZERS. NOW JERRY'S  
ALL SMASHED UP...





AS SERGEANT CRAGG LOOKED DOWN UPON THE STRANGELY HAUNTED MAN, A WAVE OF COMPASSION SWEEPED OVER HIM. GONE WAS THE BITTERNESS AND THE STRIFE...

SURE I'LL TELL THEM, SIR. YOU SAVED THE WHOLE POSITION.

CAPTAIN BOYD, WHO HAD LIVED IN SUCH CONSTANT SELF-TORTURE, HAD DIED WELL SATISFIED... AND WHO COULD BLAME AN OLD FOOL OF A SERGEANT FOR LYING?



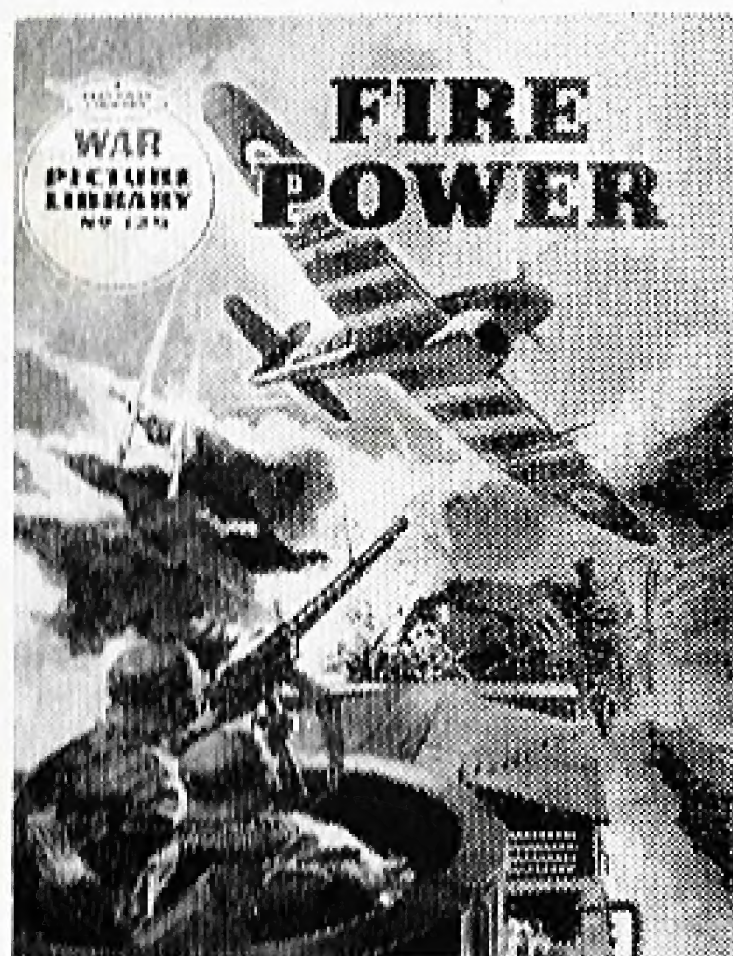
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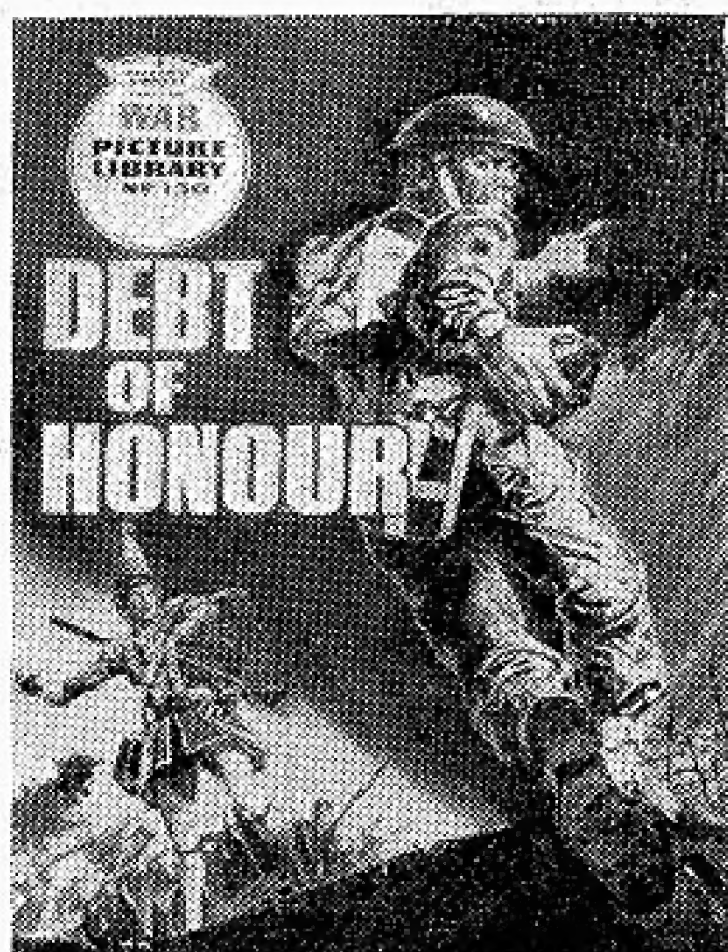
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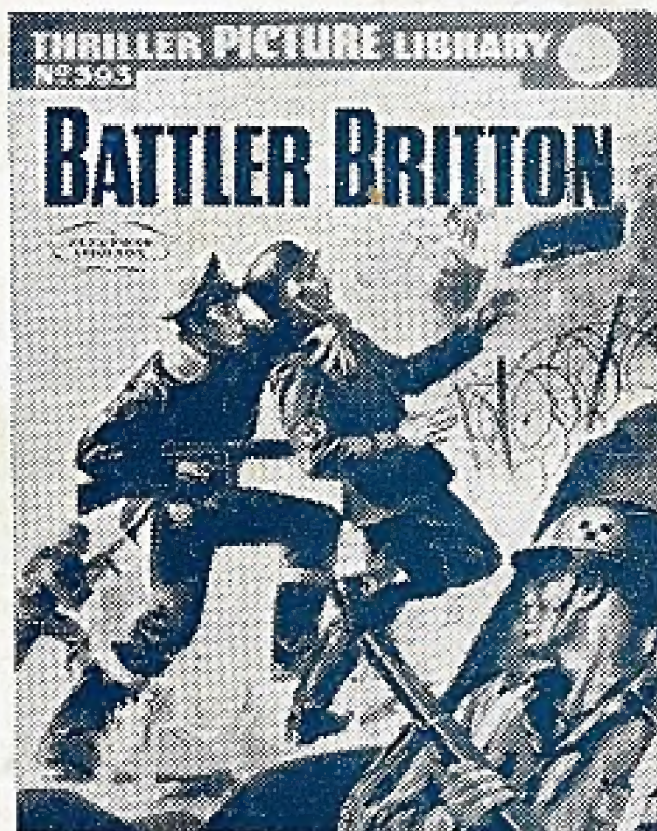


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